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MANSIONS

HALLS and



PALACES OF

HEAVEN







THE
MANSIONS, HALLS, AND
PALACES
OF
H E A V E N ;

Or, Glimpses of the Spirit-Land.

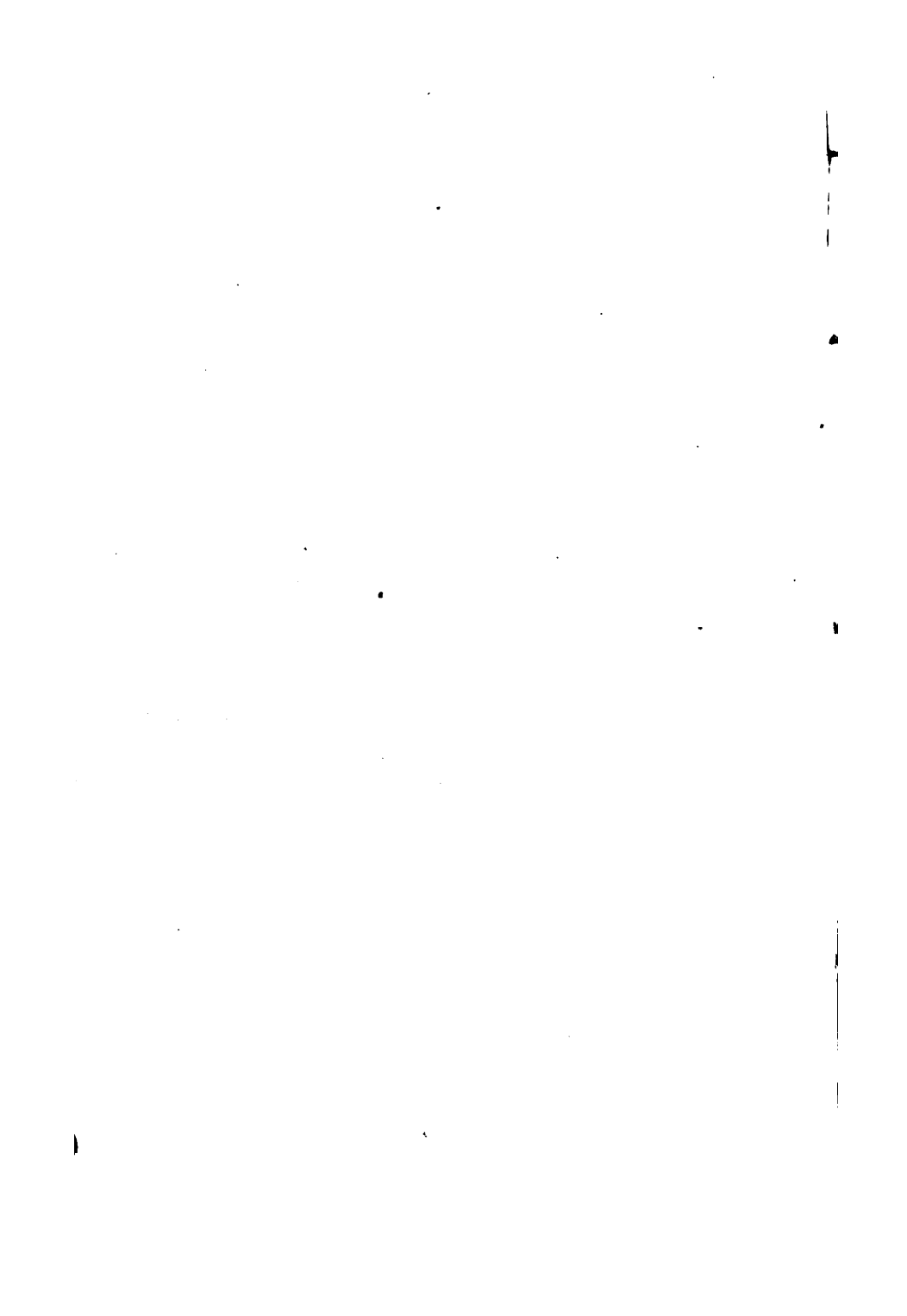
UNDER THE SIMILITUDE OF A VISION.

By ROBERT SEAGER.



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PREFACE.

THE thoughts embodied in the following pages were suggested to the writer during a time of great trial and suffering arising from a severe accident, which laid him aside from active engagements which had so absorbed his time from an early age as to leave but little opportunity for mental pursuits. They were commenced solely with a view of beguiling many an otherwise weary hour, there being no intention of following them to their present length ; but, as good John Bunyan says—

“ As I pulled it came, and so I penned
It down, until at last it came to be
The length, and breadth, and bigness which you see.”

In the attempt to grasp so holy, so interesting, and so absorbing a theme, the writer is deeply conscious of much weakness and inability, yet, if he has been enabled to throw up but one clod of earth on the great highway

of thought on so infinite a subject, he will feel himself deeply rewarded for all his most pleasant toil.

The subject is one which should command the deepest interest and attention of all reflective minds ; and though thick clouds and darkness may hover round about it, yet, when reason and analogy come, in a loving spirit, to light their tapers at the blaze of revelation, we are enabled, in some measure, to penetrate the darkness, and

“ Where reason fails, with all her powers,
There faith prevails, and love adores.”





INTRODUCTION.

ON a tombstone in the churchyard of the quiet village of Mistley, on the Essex coast, is the following singular epitaph :—

“ She was—but I need words to tell you what ;
Say what a wife should be, and she was that.”

This homely but forcible eulogium of the dead is more powerful by what it obscures than by what it reveals. This appears to be emphatically the case with many of the sublime passages of the Book of Truth, and especially so of those bright glimpses of the spirit land which are strewn along its hallowed pages. While that which is revealed is sufficient to strengthen and confirm our faith and to satisfy our well-grounded hope, that which is enshrouded outreaches the utmost stretch of our insatiable curiosity and desire.

But, considering the duties which are involved in the condition of life in which we are placed, a certain amount of obscurity upon these points appears to be absolutely indispensable to our present state of existence ; for could our eye once gaze in reality upon the King in His beauty, and view the land which is afar off, we could never again be content to submit to the toil and drudgery incident to

this present preparatory state, and therefore we may well exclaim, both with reference to that which is revealed and to that which is enshrouded, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." But though we have not that complete record on the subject which a laudable curiosity might desire, yet there is nothing to forbid inquiry and investigation so long as our investigation is restrained within proper limits. On the contrary, the subject naturally opens up a field of delightful and profitable speculation, yet there is not an inch of ground on which to dogmatise. He who soars with most adventurous wing can never scale the battlements, for all our highest researches can never rise beyond the probabilities of conjecture; therefore none are able to say, "Give place; I've seen, and sure I ought to know." The question, then, naturally arises, What is the true basis upon which all such inquiries should rest? Listen to the answer in that grand chorus chanted by the angels to the wondering shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, the tune-ful notes of which have sent their reverberations down to us, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men;" and we are bold to say that every speculation which has reference to the future home of the redeemed which does not harmonise with the spirit of this song must be overthrown. And, we ask, is it not equally correct that every theory which comes within this range is entitled at least to candid consideration? Here, then, we would take our stand, not wishing to dogmatise nor even to dispute, but only venturing feebly to suggest a few thoughts which afforded comfort and encouragement to our own mind in many a trying hour. Let us glance

very briefly at these two considerations—Glory to God, Goodwill to man.

In reflecting on the former we are liable, as weak, dependent creatures, to dwell too fully on the attributes of His love and beneficence; or, looking upon ourselves as guilty sinners, utterly helpless and ruined; unless His great mercy intervenes for our rescue and recovery, there is danger, amidst the exuberance of His mercy, of our forgetting that He has other attributes, the manifestation of which equally claim our admiration and research. We must, therefore, remember that our God is not only merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and full of compassion, but that He is also “glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.” “The heavens declare His glory, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork.” “God is known by the judgments which He executeth.” “Great is our Lord and of great power: His understanding is infinite.”

Now, as every intelligent being, in proportion to the capacity with which he is endowed, is designed by God to be a transcript of His own mind, blessed with capabilities of loving and serving Him, does it not follow that, in a pure and sinless state, where every faculty of the mind will be fully developed, all the attributes of Deity will form a source of endless study and admiration, and conspire alike to excite in all hearts one triumphant song, “Glory to God in the highest?” “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive not only worship, but power, and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour, and glory and blessing, for ever and ever.” The glory of God, therefore, as seen not only in His mercy, love, and good-

ness, but also in His wisdom, power, justice, and all His other attributes, will be the grand centre to which every employment of the beatified must converge, the everlasting foundation upon which every enjoyment must rest; and everything derogatory to this, wherever it may exist, throughout the entire universe, must produce discord, misery, and death.

In considering our second proposition, the question naturally arises, "What is man?" There are many aspects in which this question may be viewed. We only propose to glance at one of them—namely, man as a spiritual being. We delight to think of man, not so much as a marvellous compound of flesh and spirit, but rather as the illustrious tenant of the house in which he lives—a house built by heaven's great Architect—a perfect model of His wonder-working skill, "most fearfully and wonderfully made," fitted up and stored with every possible requisite and convenience for its more wonderful inhabitant, and most perfectly adapted for that state of being in which he is placed, but nevertheless held by him only as a temporary home, and therefore exposed to all the storms and tempests of time, and, like all things earthly, must eventually sink in ruinous decay; but all this ruin having no effect whatever upon the essential life of the inmate, for even amid the wild fury of the destructive elements around he is heard exultingly to exclaim, "We know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building above, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Man spiritually has but one life, the bud of which is put forth in time to blossom in eternity; and whatever schemes of goodwill or benevolence

may be devised for his happiness, even by a Being of infinite love and beneficence, cannot be confined to the narrow sphere of his earthly existence, but must have a bearing upon his whole eternity of being. It follows, therefore, that the condition of this spiritual life, being a state perfectly distinct from his mere animal existence, can never be disturbed by all the persecutions, privations, and sufferings which the body may be compelled to undergo.

Was not this the secret of those loud songs of rejoicing which burst from the two mangled bodies thrust into that dark inner cell at Philippi, the notes of which were heard above the blast of the midnight tempest, which shook the prison walls to their foundations? Was not this the secret that formed so unassailable a tower of strength around those whose earthly tenements were heaped ruthlessly upon the martyr's blazing pile, or cast as food to the ravenous beasts of prey? Deep down in their inmost hearts they heard a still small voice, which said, "Fear not them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." "Nothing shall harm you while ye are followers of that which is good." "Though thou passest through the waterfloods, they shall not overflow thee, and though thou passest through the fire, it shall not kindle upon thee." "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Man, therefore, being endowed with capacities of endless duration, the all-absorbing question naturally arises, "Where shall I spend my eternity?" This question must, to some extent, engage the mind of every enlightened human being, however thickly the heart may be encased

by the interwoven shades of wealth or worldliness ; and even though the mind may have become deeply absorbed by earthly pleasures, yet, like the unwelcome rays of light which gleam into and discover the lurking-place of the fugitive who seeks in vain to hide himself from the vengeance which pursues him on his track, so this all-dreaded question pierces through the interstices of the heart's encasement, and forcing its way to the innermost recesses of the conscience, demands an honest answer. On the verge of this question immediately arise before the mind two conditions of existence, towards one of which the heart is as surely impelled as the needle to the pole. The one is a condition of endless happiness and felicity, the other of endless woe and misery.

Now, the mind naturally recoils from the contemplation of an eternity of misery, and, therefore, whenever it is presented as the inevitable issue of a life of sin, men draw around themselves the curtain of forgetfulness, that, like the silly ostrich which hides its head in the thicket, they may not see the danger ; and, having at the best but low and confused ideas of that place of felicity which the saints delight to call their home, looking upon it as a place far too ethereal for their consideration, or too inert for their enjoyment, they resolve to seek their happiness in the present, and compel the future to care for itself ; whereas, if they would only compare the statements of Holy Writ with the constitution of their own minds, they would discover that the eternal home which God has prepared for the righteous must be a place of boundless activities, embracing everything which can possibly recommend it to all candid and ingenuous minds ; a place

which, above all others, is the most congenial with the sublimest instincts and the purest desires of human nature ; a place where the soul will doubtless retain that perfect sense of consciousness which will enable it to resume those studies and pursuits in which it delighted when on earth as far as those pursuits are consistent with its higher state of existence, where the memory will retain its wonted place in the soul unimpaired, and not unimpaired alone, but adding increased vigour to its immortality, will be enabled to call up faces and scenes connected with its life on earth, and in the clearer light of eternity will be able to unravel those mysteries of wisdom and providence hid from the world for ages, and where that wonderful faculty of the human mind which men call intuition (which, even in this imperfect state of being, enables the eye of mortal, in many instances, to penetrate into the heart of his fellow, and discover those secrets which the heart vainly endeavours to hide) shall attain to such increased development as shall empower us to climb with ease those heights of knowledge, the bare sight of which would cause the most gigantic minds of earth (encumbered with the garb of frail mortality) to tremble with dismay, and where the soul, with all its loftiest conceptions, and in a state of ever-advancing enlargement, will bathe in the exhaustless fulness of Deity for ever and ever.





B O O K I.

THE ARGUMENT.—Midnight—Guardian Angels—Light at Eventide—Precious Promises—Longing after Rest—The Sudden Transition—The Golden City—The Angelic Messengers—My Guardian Angel—The Boundary of Paradise—The Hall of Audience—Immanuel welcomes the Newly-arrived—Heavenly and Earthly Royalty compared—Queen Victoria : the Secret of her Power—Description of the Hall of Audience—The Grand Chorus of Heaven—An Army of Messengers despatched on Errands of Mercy and Love—A Company of Ministering Spirits returned from Earth present their Reports—My Guardian Angel presents me to the Prince.

IN the calm hour of silent midnight, when the busy world had sunk into the lap of repose, I lay, with limbs transfixed, upon a bed of pain. The weary watchers had retired to rest and left me to the angels, that shining host who keep perpetual guard in all our ways. The wheels of life performed but sluggishly their revolutions, and the frail bark which had withstood the rage of many an angry blast seemed at last just ready to be engulfed, and that bright temple where the soul was wont to hold her deepest and divinest counsels, where she had held the reins of government, and from whence she ushered forth her high behests, was now a scene of wild and dread confusion. The charms of earth had fled like the early dew of morning ; but there was peace within. A loving Saviour had

in childhood ~~would~~ ~~won~~ my heart and won it, and although thick ~~brins~~ and ~~thorns~~ had often cast themselves about it, threatening to shut out the radiant light of heaven, yet that light had not departed; and now, when care, and suffering, and weakness all united their dark forces against me, every cerement in which it had been encased gave way, and the promise was abundantly fulfilled, "At eventide it shall be light." And then another gracious promise came alighting on my soul like gentlest dew upon the soft greensward—"Fear not, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Then all the sorrows which I had long left in the wilderness of time again came crowding back upon my mental vision, at which my heart aghast cried out, "Lord, I am weary of earth; if it be Thy will, send some bright messenger to take me home; but if Thou hast still a work for me to do in this cold world of sin, then oh! my Father, not my will, but Thine be done." Then came a voice, soft as the gentle summer breeze, which said, "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not." And as I lay like one entranced, I found myself transported in a moment to a region of insufferable light and glory. Before me rose a city great and high, whose massive walls, all glorious to behold, were built on living adamant, whose ample gates of pearl, once opened wide to let the King of glory in, had never more been shut. A shining throng, bearing on fleetest wing their messages of love, were passing to and fro, and as I gazed with mutest rapture on the scene, my heart melted within me, and, falling down upon the golden pavement, my whole nature seemed just ready to dissolve, when one of the shining ones approached, and, casting

on me a smile of heavenly radiance, laid hold upon my right hand, and, lifting me up, spake in cadences of angelic sweetness—"All hail, my brother! Our glorious Immanuel hath witnessed all thy sorrows and distresses, and sent me here to comfort thee. Drink from this golden cup a draught which I have brought fresh from the river of life. Drink deep, and it shall strengthen thee for all the blissful task which lies before thee. Thy work on earth is not yet ended. Thou hast to acquit thyself as yet on many a well-fought field, but rest assured that 'as thy day so thy strength shall be,' and 'when thy heart and flesh shall fail our God shall be thy strength and portion for ever.' To me is assigned the happy task of assisting thy mortal-eye to catch some faint glimpse of the glories of this happy place, that thy faith may never more grow dim, that thy hope may never want a firm rock on which to cast its anchor, until thou art crowned a citizen of this glorious inheritance, where faith and hope are swallowed up in everlasting life and love. Thou seest this city wall, so strong, and deep, and high, garnished with all manner of precious stones, whose lustre is so dazzling that the foul monster, Sin, can never cast his eye upon it, whose battlements are so lofty that grim Death, who stalks the earth, thief-like, with light and silent footstep, can never scale its summit. Its foundations are the everlasting hills. See that stalwart guardian Truth, ever standing on his watch-tower, that whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie may never enter. But before we pass these pearly gates which lead to the Celestial City, cast thine eye eastward and westward, and, to assist the weakness of thy vision, take this long-ranging lens of crystal, and tell

me what thou seest." There was such a soul of kindness in the words of my celestial guide as made compliance not possible alone but easy, and so, dismissing all my earthly fears, I cheerfully replied, "My guardian friend (if such familiar phrase thou wilt permit from one so lowly), I nothing can discern on either side but the same glorious city wall, which even with this telescope of heavenly mould appears to me to outstrip all bounds and all dimensions." "Then," said my guide, "imagine, if thou canst, three other walls of equal vastness and magnificence, all equilateral placed, and thou mayst catch some dim perception of the extent and beauty of our glorious and eternal city. But let us pass the portals, nor waste our admiration on the casket, while its palaces, like mines of gorgeous gems, await our admiration and research."

"See, here, the grand Hall of Audience, where our illustrious Prince Immanuel receives those happy spirits who are accounted worthy of everlasting life, and places the fadeless crown of glory on their brow. It is here all new-born songs of triumph are rehearsed, and embassies of grace, and love, and mercy receive their great commissions, and give in their reports. Let us hasten to pay our obeisance to our exalted and all-glorious Prince."

"Alas!" I cried, "how shall sinful dust and ashes stand before Him, seeing that the heavens are not pure in His sight; how shall my feeble eye of mortality gaze on the splendours of His uncreated beauty?" To which my guide in softest words replied, "Thou speakest as a true-born child of earth; thou judgest after earthly modes of royalty, where pride and ostentation oftentimes feed on sycophancy and adulation, where the might, and glory, and

majesty which await on kings are, alas ! too often supported by the sword of power, wielded by oppression and deep wrong—a power which may serve to bind kingdoms, but can never unite hearts. 'Tis true that here and there the earth has witnessed glorious exceptions, for she who wields the sword of power within that favoured isle from which thou camest has taught the impetuous nations which surround, that right, and truth, and love are stronger buttresses around a monarch's throne than all the artillery of a world in arms. But within the precincts of this happy place the principle of love pervades all hearts, and makes a perfect conquest of them all, for perfect love casts out all servile fear. Come with me, then, and catch just one sweet glance at the benignant face of our adored Immanuel, and fear and dread dismay shall never more hold carnival within thy heart, nor ever even find a lodgment there."

With faltering steps I hastened, leaning on the arm of my beloved guide, and, much encouraged by his sweet assurances, arrived at last at the Grand Balcony, which, by innumerable entrances, leads to the massive Hall itself. This balcony was reached by a broad and easy flight of steps, which, like the whole gorgeous building, appeared to be cut in the solid rock. At either end of these steps, and at convenient distances, were set up a number of sloping balustrades of purest gold, enriched with gems, set off with rarest tracery, which with the balcony's front did intersect and correspond. And now there rose before us a scene of grand and gorgeous magnificence, before which all earthly glory pales and fades away, to fathom which all thought is lost, and human imagination,

though kindled by the light of heaven, and borne on fancy's most adventurous wing, must ever soar in vain. How, then, shall human words depict where language proves insipid and bereft of power? Yet, in this sweet, luxurious bewilderment I fained to linger, that, when the first emotions of surprise and joy were overpast, I might indulge a more deliberate investigation, and, grasping my heavenly guide, I ventured to look up, and, gazing all around with such coherence as my wonderment permitted, I eagerly inquired, "Oh, tell me upon what blest world of beauty am I cast!" Before my wondering eye were thrones of burnished gold, rank behind rank, innumerable; and suddenly a sound, loud as the voice of many waters, deep as loud, harmonious as deep, came floating on the air, every note of which discovered in each breast a corresponding chord of all-inspiring sympathy; and from their shining thrones a multitudinous throng (compared to which that mighty host of warriors o'er which proud Xerxes wept were but a troop) arose, with souls on fire, and voices like ten thousand thunders, all attuned to harmony. They chant the chorus of the skies, until the sound reverberates through all the azure vaults of heaven, "Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" At these transporting sounds my heart became ravished within me, and as the nerves of my poor weak humanity leaped to their highest tension, and mortality seemed ready to give way, there came a chord of softest symphony, sweeter than all the heavenly cadences, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and wisdom, and honour, and glory, and blessing for ever. Amen."

And now my guide, taking me gently by the hand, led me to the Gallery of Observation. This is a large central platform, of dodecagon shape, reached by twelve easy steps on every side, formed of the native rock, like the whole building as before described, only the floor was paved of one huge block of purest jasper, exceeding precious, on which were placed soft lounging seats, covered with cloth of gold, and bordered round with amaranth. On these reclined, in softest ease, the groups led thither by laudable curiosity, or to study more minutely the wonders of the place.

Amid these happy groups we mingled, and when the spell which bound our souls, as with the silken cord of an enchantress, became sufficiently relaxed, my guide began :—

“Thou seest yon throne of purest sapphire, towering high above the golden thrones by which it is encircled, casting its lovely tints of ethereal blue upon the burnished gold on every side, reflecting soft, emblended light, rich, varied, and resplendent. There sits our glorious King Immanuel: thine ear hath heard the songs of loudest praise in which His matchless triumphs are rehearsed, but vast eternity will not suffice to set forth all His worth. Thou seest that glorious throng which now stand round His throne: they are a band of His great army, the messengers of His love and mercy, panting to do His will, counting no task too irksome, no toil too heavy or too long, that they may gather fresh laurels for His crown. When these upon their various commissions shall have been despatched, then another company will wait to give in their reports, and in that blest number we shall be

favoured to bear some humble part ; meanwhile, as time presses, for thy stay is brief (or otherwise we take no note of time), let us survey, as best we can, the marvels which are thrown with such profusion on our visual orbs. But here observe, and I pray thee forget it not, that this resplendent Hall, with its teeming glories, is but the vestibule that leads to all those higher scenes of glory behind glory, in which the Eternal is sometimes pleased most graciously to manifest Himself, on which created eye of saint or seraph cannot gaze unveiled ; and behind all these there still remaineth, and must evermore remain, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory wherein is enshrined the Essence of Divinity, before whose dazzling brightness no man nor angel can approach and live.

“Thou seest yon noble products of celestial art embellishing these walls in rich profusion, painted on crystal, and tempered in celestial fires which blend their colours into softest harmony, and render them indelible for ever. These are heraldic blazonments, copied by seraph pencil from that wonderful register known to us as the ‘Horoscope of the Ages,’ which I will show thee in due course. They are precious remembrances of deeds of valour and renown, and glorious chivalry, performed among the poor decrepid sons of toil, of little note among the chronicles of time and never even whispered in the ear of earthly fame, but treasured and immortalised in heaven.

“But, hark ! the trumpet sounds ; let us hasten to take our place among the ambassadors from earth.” And now a glorious throng assemble round about the throne, all

welcomed with a smile of heavenly sweetness ; all eyes are fixed, all ears attent to learn the history of their blessed embassies. They told how they had comforted the sick and sorrowing, forming a shield in time of danger to many a weak one, and, after a most desperate encounter armed with the sword of the Eternal Spirit, had utterly routed bold Apollyon on the field, wresting from his cruel grasp the hearts of many that were wavering and desponding ; to whom the Prince most graciously replied, " Servants of God, well done ; most faithfully have ye completed your commissions. Go and refresh yourselves among the ambrosial bowers ; feast of the delicious fruits which there abound, and in due time ye shall be rewarded with yet higher service." Then casting on myself a gaze of inexpressible delight, and holding out the golden sceptre to encourage my approach, He spake in words which, though majestic, sounded on my ear like harmony ineffable, " Fair, wayward child of earth, I know thy toils and sorrows, and all thy tribulations have ever been before Me, but let Me lovingly remind thee that thy lot is but the common heritage of all My saints, and, if needs be, thou must yet suffer tribulation ; it is but the searching medicament which the skilful physician gives to purge the foulness of disease ere he pours in the healing balm of life. Thou art permitted to enjoy this calm, brief respite that thou mayst know that heaven, though deeply veiled from mortal gaze, is not a dream of human fancy, but a glorious and divine reality. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give unto thee a crown of life." Then, fixing on my guide His beaming eye, glowing with unmingled satisfaction, He calmly said, " Sweet messenger of love, I

have been witness of thy patient toil amid My glorious host, who wait continually upon the heirs of life, who, like the light itself, unseen, unheard, yet quietly uncovering all the gloom which darkness has inwoven round the world, and brightly revealing all the gladness of nature, pours down its joy on every human heart. Such is the self-imposed task of all My ministering host. But know this—in blessing thou art doubly blest, and that all thy labours scattered o'er a world of sin shall be returned to thee a hundredfold. Well hast thou learned the perfect law of happiness, which, not confined to these blest regions of unmixed delight, but ever was, and ever must remain, the universal law which binds in sweetest harmony all orders of intelligence, and which the Book of Truth sums up in this brief sentence, 'He that watereth shall be watered also himself;' and where'er thy lot is cast be this the powerful source of all thy strength. Thy Prince's eye is ever on thee. Lead on thy charge awhile amid the bowers of Paradise; then let him fill up his allotted task on earth until the summons shall go forth—

'It is enough: now come up hither.'"





BOOK II.

THE ARGUMENT.—Our Reluctant Retreat from the Hall of Audience—Heaven and Earth contrasted—No Place for Sorrow in Heaven—Description of the Garden of Paradise—The Palace of the King of Kings—The Colleges of Learning—Growth a Necessary Principle in the Constitution of created Intelligences—Gradations of Knowledge in Heaven—Infants and their Guardians—The Halls of Science—David—Solomon—The Philosophers of Time—The Halls of Music—David's Harp—Miriam's Lyre—The Song of Moses—The Symphonies of Isaiah—Milton—Shakespeare—The Mansions of our Father's House—Happy Recognitions—The Ways of Providence reviewed in Clearer Light.

WITH lingering feet and hearts which burned with purest rapture and delight, we passed amid innumerable ranks of shining ones, whose radiant eyes reflected back the light which He who sat upon the throne had kindled ; and looking back we cast on all a loving, longing, but a brief farewell, sheltering 'neath His all-gracious promise who hath said, " But I shall see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

Earth has a thousand pangs of sad regrets, which doggedly pursue the weary steps of all her wayfarers 'mid every track of life, and never weary till mortality retires to hide herself within the dreary caverns of the tomb. But heaven being crowded o'er with pure unending joys, there is no room for sorrow or regret. The best of earth's

delights, if long protracted, but leadeth on to weariness and satiety ; but heaven's pleasures wait on appetite, where all enjoyment but enlarges our capacity for bliss. It was, therefore, without a pang of disappointment that we passed from all these scenes of pure felicity to mingle amid other scenes of splendour equally varied and magnificent, bearing alike the impress of His all-creating, beautifying, and enriching hand, on whom all things do wait, and He giveth them their portion of meat in due season, until we reached the balmy grove which leads into the midst of Paradise, each moment but intensifying the rapture of our hearts, while sweetest odours greeted our every step, and sweeter converse all our way beguiled, and soon we were encircled by the gorgeous Mansions, Halls, and Palaces of Heaven.

The scenery among which these wondrous and magnificent buildings are situated is richly varied by hill and dale, fountain and brooklet, flower and foliage of every shape and hue, which, rising terrace behind terrace, far beyond the ken of man or angel, is blended into one boundless landscape of ever-varying beauty, harmony, and grandeur. In the midst thereof runs the pure river of water of life, from whose flowery banks myriads of light-winged zephyrs perpetually arise, laden with the sweet exhalations which are ever there distilled, and as they float along, weaving the odours of ten thousand bowers, each one fairer than all the Garden of Eden, scatter on all around an atmosphere of life and fragrance which he who breathes must feel himself immortal. Upon the summit of a gently rising ground, whose beauteous slopes were covered o'er with flowers of every hue, save here and there a mossy

path between, there stood a cluster of enchanting bowers, with amaranth and choicest plants of living green, all overhung and twined sufficient to add grace and beauty to the loveliness around, but not to obstruct the view. Thither with lightest steps and hearts as light we urged our pleasant course amid the chanting of a thousand harmonies, for every lovely scene evoked a song. This summit gained, we sat beneath the charming shade, and casting on me a smile which harmonised with all the sweetnesses around, my guide began :—

“I fear, my dearest friend, the scenes we’ve passed may be exhaustive to one whose cup of joy is so extremely limited, for as yet thy tender nerves are unaccustomed to the glorious rapture which this place unfolds ; therefore beneath these bowers we’ll rest awhile, and calmly view each beauty as it rises to our eye, and though by subdivision we may lose the ravishment which teeming grandeur thrusts upon our ’wildering sight, yet by descending to minute examination and inquiry we shall, in the end, gain more knowledge and more enduring joy.

“Thou wilt remember that before we passed the city gates thine eyes were charmed with its matchless walls of wondrous jewellery, but thou didst wonder more when thou wert gazing on what then seemed to thee its boundlessness. Now know that all around the interior of these vast equilateral walls, erect in all its matchless grandeur and proportion, stands the palace of the Almighty King of Kings, abutting on to which, and all communicating, stand the mansions, halls, and colleges, the whole encircled round with fountains, groves, and ever-blooming bowers, and all with majesty and beauty interblent.

"Thou seest within the midst of yon ambrosial bowers that vast assemblage of solid but chaste buildings rising turret above turret in massive masonry? These are the Colleges of Learning." "Nay, surely, my beloved guide," I quick replied, "there are no schools in heaven. I pray thee to explain that same word 'colleges,' and put your heavenly meaning on it." To which my guide, in words of wisdom, tempered with gentleness, replied, "Think not to find, even in these realms of pure, unsullied light, in creatures all dependent on the never-failing source of life from whence they draw their being, a state of absolute perfection, an attribute which only can reside in Deity. We have perfection in degree; we are the vessels of His wisdom, power, and love, each vessel perfect, and each vessel full; but we are also creatures capable of growth, and not capable alone. Enlargement is a living principle which ever works within us, and without which we should die. We thirst for knowledge, and knowledge gained does never satiate, but enlarges our capacity, and that enlarged, enlarges our desire to bask ourselves in the ocean of infinitude.

"These colleges (or schools, if that word best suits thy mind) are not set up as places of restraint, where learning is an irksome task, but places of resort ineffably delightful, where large and pure inquiries are evoked, and all the glorious capabilities of thought evolved in wonderful gradation.

"Here sits the infant taken from the lap of its fond mother, in whose heart it had been set up and worshipped in the place of God, now tended with a loving angel's care till that same mother, with heart reproved and

chastened, shall fold it in her arms again, and own that all the ways of Providence are wise and kind. Here all the babes in knowledge find green pastures of delight, and blending mind with mind, and thought with thought, soon reach to most gigantic strength, until they, thus prepared, become strong, stalwart soldiers in the army of Immanuel.

“Turn now thine eye to yonder mulberry groves, emblems of wisdom, pure and unalloyed; in the midst thereof, with stately grandeur rise the Halls of Science, choice specimens of heaven’s inimitable art. Here all those mighty problems which perplexed the wisest of earth’s philosophers for ages,—the source of light and heat, through which all earthly things inherit or display their loveliness;—the laws which the Eternal hath set up to guide those hidden forces which alike send up the lovely petals of the tiniest flower, or roll those million orbs which light the earth and spangle the ethereal vault of heaven, with all those countless questions which science and art evoked, are weighed in the balances of truth and wisdom, and all those doubts which stumbling chance or purblind reason hung as a thick veil around creation, and strove with puny arm to eject the Almighty from His own universe, are scattered like thin vapours which obstruct the opening light of day. Here lofty thought meets lofty thought in bold, adventurous, but wise and glorious encounter, and truth, that living target which men set up on earth on which to practise all their shafts of wit, and cruel hate and scorn, and would have slain, had she not proved immortal, here reigns triumphantly upon her own most radiant and eternal throne. Here Israel’s Shepherd

King, who kept, while in the wilderness, his father's sheep, watching erewhile those wondrous constellations o'er his head, whose magnitude and grandeur bade him cry, 'Lord, what is man?' now learns that man is greater than the stars. Here his illustrious son, the famed for knowledge, but for wisdom more, who gathered stores of nature out of every field until he had exhausted every land, now finds a source illimitable outspread before him; and here those sages, known as the philosophers of time, who groped their way through the deep caverns of dark superstition and blind bigotry to reason's clearer light, whose names were handed down from age to age, and shall be to the end of time, as men who, giant-like, towered far above their fellows. All these fall prostrate at the dazzling blaze which rushes from the empyrean throne, and cry, 'How manifold are Thy works, O Lord; in wisdom hast Thou made them all. Thou tellest the number of the stars, and callest them all by their names. How unsearchable is His goodness, and His ways are past finding out.'

"But hark! the distant sound of harpers harping with their harps announces the presence of our mighty Prince. He comes to lead His saints to the fountains of living waters, and feast them on these fair celestial fruits. See there a multitude which no man can number, gathered from east and west, and north and south, of every tribe and nation under heaven; how gorgeous their endless banners float. Oh! listen to their rapturous song:— 'Unto us a child is born; unto us a Son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

He shall reign, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David.'”

My soul was now overwhelmed with rapture, and as I wonderingly inquired, “And does God condescend in very deed to dwell with men?” the motto on a blazing shield reflected back the answer—“The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people.” Then I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying, “Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth; let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and the bride hath made herself ready.” And as my elated eye gazed on this blissful throng, that favourite chant of earth came welling up:—

“I see a land of spirits bright,
Who reap the pleasures there;
They all are clothed in purest white,
And conquering palms they bear.
They drink the vivifying stream;
They pluck the ambrosial fruit;
And each records the praise of Him
Who tuned his golden lute.”

This gorgeous pageantry now passed, my heavenly guide resumed once more his enrapturing discourse—“Dost thou not hear those most mellifluous notes like the sweet breathings of some huge *Æolian* harp, striking upon the ambient air? They come from yonder garden of delights, where the myrtle bowers reflect their softest green; where the blossoms of the pomegranate, that perfection of beauty, mingle with the ever cheerful coreopsis, and where amaranth and bay send forth their branches of immortal glory.

In the midst of that beautiful enclosure, rich in immortal elegance and grandeur, stand the glorious music-halls of heaven. There seraphs try their choicest strains of harmony; there saints and angels sound their most mellifluous notes.

“ They chant the splendours of His name,
Delighted with the wondrous theme,
And bid the universe admire
The glories of the Almighty Sire;
Whose throne all nature’s wreck survives;
Whose power through endless ages lives.

“ There every new discovery of His love, like an ever-welling fountain of delight, comes gushing up from hearts attuned to praise. There David strikes his harp to sounds of harmony which the whole united voices of creation never reached before. There Miriam has cast aside the timbrel with which she fired the hearts of all the Israelites to rapture, as she joined her notes of song to the requiem which the foaming billows chanted over the destruction of the proud Egyptian host, when all her people were delivered by a Power omnipotent, for now a golden lyre delights her more, and now she sings how Jesus, our Immanuel, led captive dire captivity, Himself the bridge across the chasm which sin had made; how by His might He spoiled the hosts of hell; enchained the monster, death, and oped the happy way to life and glorious liberty. And there that prince of prophets, who looked down the vista of long future years, and saw the glory of the latter days, now chants in highest strains the soul-inspiring symphonies of a sin-stained world redeemed—chords which shall vibrate to the end of time, nor *there* shall end, but gathering power from every new awakened heart, shall

send reverberations down to every age. And there that shepherd who broke the galling chain from off the neck of God's elect, and wrought by an almighty arm those signs and wonders which struck consternation to the hearts of all their foes, and brought out Israel with complete deliverance; who led them (braving all the terrors of a howling wilderness) to the glorious Land of Promise, then gat him up the mountain top to die, now leads in thrilling strains the mighty company of God's elect, of every age, from every land, as they pour out their souls in the same hallowed symphony which fell with earnest accents from his own dying lips:—

“ ‘I will publish the name of the Lord. Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock; His work is perfect, and all His ways are judgment; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is He.’

“There he who roved with most adventurous wing, casting his sounding-line into the depths of human thought, and ‘pursuing things unattempted upon earth before in prose or rhyme,’ and, not content to roam amid the widest fields which earth spread out, stretched on with arduous flight to heights unscaled, from whence he saw how, with affrighted and most terrible confusion, the warring angels, who, filled with ambitious thoughts, from whence conceived I know not, conspired against the glorious majesty of Heaven, who gave them purest being, and with it all the happiness which ever waits upon reciprocated love, were thrust from all those glorious abodes into the gulf of bottomless perdition, and how, with fraud and envy, and most cruel wiles, they sought to bury the whole race of man beneath the abyss of their own hope-

less ruin—now sings in nobler strains how our Messiah King, by the matchless prowess of His own strong arm, hath wrought out man's salvation and deliverance, and thus filled up the vacant seats of heaven. And there that mighty Bard, who traversed the depths of human nature with most unfaltering step, revealing all those secret mines of thought and passion from whence materials are dug which go to build up character, who placed the human heart as in a faithful mirror upon every stage of human life, that sin and folly might hide their monstrous head, that dark intrigue, and cruelty, and bitter wrong, beholding themselves in all their hideous deformity, might hie for ever to the caves of dark oblivion, whose genius, though British born, was far too broad for any single spot of earth, but with a mighty arm enclasped the world, now finds that same attribute of mercy (which upon earth droppeth as the gentle dew) to be an ocean free and fathomless. There all the bards of earth, of every clime and tongue, who scattered the tidings of the cross in tuneful numbers upon every land, now join in one language all their newborn songs, ascribing 'Salvation unto our God that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.'

"Now cast thine eyes all round this garden of Elysium, and see spread out in great profusion, order, and variety the glorious Mansions of Recognition, known also as the Mansions of our Father's House, promised to all His sorrowing disciples by our exalted Lord upon the eve of His immortal conquests over sin and death; and though within the circle of thy feeble eye they may seem numberless, yet what thou seest are but as a few choice specimens

of beauteous pearls which ocean here and there deposits on the strand, but leaves ten millions more piled on her rocky bed. Here kindred hearts, long severed by the storms of time, now meet in love's embrace, no more to part; and all the toils and troubles of the way are counted and recounted o'er, and all the darkest incidents of life are here reviewed, not through the misty veil which time sets up, which sheds on all a doubtful, hazy light, but in the clear, broad sunlight of a Father's love—a love which followed close on every step through all the tortuous, winding paths of grief and toil; and now *the reason why*, which so perplexed them through all the journey of their earthly pilgrimage, is seen in characters of blazing light, inscribed along the pages of eternal truth, with the Divine Spirit's commentary on it. 'We have had fathers of our flesh which chastened us after their own pleasure, but *He* for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness.' 'And these light afflictions which are but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' But we must not forget that the space allotted for your present sojourn here is limited. Did I say limited? for we are so unaccustomed to that word amid these boundless oceans of delight, that in some sense it is a term well-nigh accounted obsolete. 'Tis true our powers, compared with the Illimitable One, are lost as drops are swallowed by the expansive ocean; but yet from 'neath His throne there comes a voice, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.' And with a life of eternal blessedness before us, and infinite variety on which to feast, and minds which, more expanded, grow on what they feed, oh! who but our all-

glorious Creator shall set up bounds to that which to our minds may seem well-nigh illimitable ?

“ But let us rest awhile, that the weakness of thy nature which thou hast not yet put off (strained to an unusual tenacity) may have an opportunity for due recoil.”





B O O K I I I .

THE ARGUMENT.—Repose in Heaven—The Picture Galleries of Heaven and Hieroglyphic Records of the Universe—The Universal Gallery—Picture of the Primeval State of Earth—The New-made World—The Garden of Eden—Man in Innocence—Man's Sin and Exposure to Perdition—Man driven from Eden—The Rescue—The First Sacrifice—A Fratricidal Scene—Moses receiving the Tables of the Law on Mount Sinai—Angelic Messengers announcing the Better Sacrifice—The Gallery of the Nations—Egypt the Cradle of Science and Art—God's Chosen Race—Their Grievous Burdens—Their Wonderful Deliverance—Canaan a Type of Heaven—The Teachings of the Ceremonial Law—Babylon, the Almighty's Threshing-floor—Rome—The Entry of Julius Cæsar with his last Trophy of Victory—Rome preparing a Highway for the Entry of the Prince of Peace.

THERE is no sleep in heaven, but there are seasons of felicitous repose when deepest contemplations arm afresh for the enjoyment of those higher scenes of rapture and delight which ever come with increased knowledge and pure love. It was after such a season of most welcome, calm repose that my heavenly guide once more began :—

“I need not ask thee if thou hast beheld that massive dome of purest crystal like to the hemisphere of some gigantic world of light, set up in sight of every bower and grove throughout our glorious Paradise. This wonderful production of Almighty skill, which, as the magnet draws

the passive steel, attracts all orders of intelligence, is called 'The Horoscope of the Ages' (of which I spake before), known also as the 'Book of God's Remembrance.' On its surface is indelibly inscribed in gorgeous transparency by the unerring finger of Omnipotence the hieroglyphic records of the universe. Now, the whole surface of this beauteous dome, when first it sprang from its Creator's hand, was covered with but the dimmest outlines or sketches, decipherable only by the Almighty Limner who had graved them there; but as these once inscrutable events unfold themselves, and all the wise and glorious designs of the Eternal are developed, these wonderful productions of His wisdom do manifest themselves in the finished pictures which you now behold. And think not that these marvellous developments of Infinity are placed like earthly gewgaws to feast a vain and idle curiosity, for every finished picture as it rises in most wonderful relief, as if reflected from some vast colossal stereoscope, contains a history and forms a part of that important key by which the mysteries of Providence, hidden before from all created eyes, are now revealed, and what was dark explained, and not explained alone, but all His ways are fully justified to all His creatures throughout all the ages that all may prostrate themselves before Him, and in one deep chorus of endless adoration cry, 'True and just and holy are all Thy ways, Lord God Almighty; let the whole universe be filled with Thy glory.' Now, this most glorious array of art divine, called by some the 'Picture Gallery of Heaven,' forms an endless study on which the most exalted genius in art may gaze with ever new and ever growing pleasure

and delight with eyes which know no weariness or satiety.

“Thou seest that this gallery is not one but many, and that each is subdivided into grand cartoons, many of which are not as yet complete, and cannot be till all the events which appertain to them have had their full accomplishment.

“Let us glance at those three compartments which more especially belong to the world from which thou camest. The first is called the ‘Universal Gallery,’ because all the events which are there portrayed are designed to link in one great brotherhood the universal race of man. This embraces the history of that direful fall from innocence and high integrity of man’s progenitors, and with them all the race, and that more wonderful recovery and restoration by which the gracious purposes of mercy are revealed, and all the wondrous attributes of Deity are reflected with increasing harmony and lustre in sight of an assembled universe. The second gallery we know as the ‘Gallery of the Nations.’ The cartoons here are not so large, but far more numerous, and each contains a separate history of every nation under heaven. It may well be called a direful history of war, and tears, and blood. Many of these pictures are not yet developed to created eye, but will unfold themselves in clearer light when all the inscrutable designs of Infinite Wisdom shall be revealed, but till then, in the language of your own bard, it must be said—

“Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will.

"The third gallery is called the 'Portrait Gallery.' This is an assemblage of most faithful miniatures, photographed from life, and deeply graven, beyond the power of man or angel to erase. These form most graphic illustrations of the ways of Providence to every separate individual, and of that influence, secret or open, which man exerts on man. 'Tis here the happy child of grace, delivered from the wilderness of sin, and safe brought home to glory, may trace each winding path through which, unseen, a tender Father guided every step, and though the way may have seemed dark, and difficult, and rough, and often strewn with thickest briars and thorns, yet all along the journey which he came he now discerns upon the finger-posts (to which his Father often pointed then, but which impatience did hinder him from pondering), 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain thee;' 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to men, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear, but will, with the temptation, also make a way of escape that ye may be able to bear it;' 'He that endureth to the end the same shall be saved.' All these most blessed assurances were shining as the sunbeam in his path through every lonely valley which he passed, but pride and unbelief did hide them often from his view.

"Having thus briefly sketched the object of these wonderful illustrations, let us now take a more minute and perfect view, but as time urges we will only mark those greater epochs which all the separate events do bind together into one history which is called the history of man's great and glorious redemption.

“Thou seest that crude chaotic mass like some huge desolated forest wild, where order hath not yet set up her plummet, and where celestial beauty hath not yet drawn her curved line, where the wild waste of waters roam at will through all the rocky palaces of confused desolation and disorder, far exceeding that most dreary vale of bones the prophet saw in vision in long after-times? These are the hieroglyphics which belong to that primeval state known upon earth as the ages dark and void, which had existence ere the river-bed of time was cut as a semicircle from the illimitable ocean of eternity. Now know this dark, mysterious void, which seemed at first without good use or purpose, was but the embryo from which the Almighty Architect prepared, and by His all-powerful word upreared, the beauteous world from which thou camest, but the story of this we leave to the laudable investigations of those minds who read the Book of Nature that they may find a key to unlock more perfectly the Book of Truth, and thus infallibly demonstrate that nature and truth are one.

“Thou seest those billows leaping mountains high, sporting themselves beneath the new-made sunlight? These are the waters which were scattered through the dark wilds of chaos and had no certain dwelling-place, but now they dance the praises of Him who fitted up their rocky boundary.

“Let thine eye now rest upon the new-made world. There life and purity and joy walk hand in hand, while loveliness and harmony spread out a thousand charms. There stands the Garden of Eden, most tastefully adorned, like some fair bride waiting her lord’s approach.

And now step forth, fresh from the Almighty Maker's hand, in matchless symmetry and beauty, mingled with mutual love and pure and fond desire, masterpiece of His creative skill, the lovely parents of the human race. But now, alas! thick clouds and darkness cover all the earth. See there the fiends of hell, with horrid stratagem and foulest wiles, have carried their assault, and man, late so innocent and happy, hath seduced from his allegiance by their guile. And now hell-born Desire lifts up man's puny arm against Omnipotence, and plucks and tastes the only fruit to him forbidden. See how the earth rocks to and fro, while Nature, through all her works, lets fall a tear. See there that monster, base-born Fear, true offspring of Transgression, and her first-born son, now finds the guilty pair at the forbidden tree, and, binding them as captives to his horrid car, he drags them through the mire of dark despair, and would have hurled them headlong to perdition had not Immanuel, in His all-boundless pity, interposed and snapped his galling chain. See now, 'neath blackened skies and tempests dire, the partners in transgression, with mutual reproaches (unknown to them before), are driven by the flaming sword from all those blooming bowers, so late their own most precious and most glorious inheritance. But our God, who is rich in mercy as in judgment, gives them yon new-made star to guide and comfort all their solitary way. This was the star of hope the wise men saw in after-times just o'er the plains of Bethlehem. Now see them stand all solitary, with hands imbrued in the life-blood and bodies clothed with the covering of the slaughtered victim which smokes upon the altar, and as they gaze in deep, mute wonder

and astonishment, pondering the meaning of this sad spectacle, see in the background of that altar, half hidden by the smoke which rises from the sacrifice, two rugged beams transversed, and there a nobler victim bleeds, and by the light which rises from that better sacrifice they see inscribed in characters of sin-subduing love, 'Look unto Me and live.'

"See now the angel Hope lighting again her glittering lamp, and Faith and Love, twin sisters in redemption and inseparably joined, unbar the gates of a more blissful and enduring Paradise.

"Yonder behold a fratricidal scene, where cruel Envy lifts its murderous hand. Hark! how the gaping earth cries out for vengeance, while the foul fiends of hell are gloating o'er the spoil—too soon triumphant, for see! the prey is rescued from their cruel grasp, while yonder convoy of admiring angels bear it, in rapture, to Immanuel's throne, the firstfruit and the pledge of that golden harvest which the glorious Ransomer shall gather into His heavenly garner to the end of time.

"See yonder rugged mount, invested all around with blackest thunderclouds and smoke, save where the clouds are riven by the fitful lightning's lurid gleam, making dense darkness yet more horrible. See in the deep shadows of the plains below, where belching thunder-peals reverberate around, a terror-stricken multitude; in every countenance there broods a silent dreadful awe, in every heart there beats a swelling throb of dire dismay. Now mark, with quick discerning eye, between the fiery fissures where the lightnings glare, a lonely traveller. Ah! he had stood before the pomp, and might, and ma-

jesty of earthly royalty with eye unquenched, and, with bold front and heart estranged to fear, had braved the haughty tyrant's withering scorn, at which strong giants might have quailed, himself a weakly vassal yet claiming at the hands of the enthroned oppressor the rights and liberties of a whole race of slaves. But mark how now he trembles at every step of his own cautious footfalls! See how that bold eye is quenched before the dazzling light, and that stout heart quivers with increased pulsation, as the glory which it had desired to see now passes by; a glory in mercy veiled, or none could behold and live. There stands God's own appointed lawgiver and sole vicegerent to the chosen race, awaiting those high behests in which were inextricably involved the endless welfare not of Israel alone, but all mankind—behests which, while they reared a standard for man's highest aims yet in themselves made nothing perfect, but only ushered in, amid dense clouds of incense, sacrifice and offering, with divers purifyings intermixed, the substance of those good things to come, pertaining to that better sacrifice. 'For the law made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God.'

"Now cast thine eye along the vista of Time's dark river, darkened by those blood-stained banners which war, and horrid lust and cruelty, hath planted in thick array on either side, with only here and there an olive branch between, like some bright oasis in a sea of sand, to relieve the gloom. But just at the close of two score centuries from where the river first began to flow there stands a grove of olives whose thick branches, spreading both far and wide, mark the beginning of the Reign of peace. The murder-

ous din of war is now no longer heard, the storms of battle which had raged so loud and long are hushed to silence. The rills of knowledge have begun to spread both far and wide. Now science, philosophy, and art, freighting the ship of wisdom with their learned lore, are wafting the deeply anxious question upon every breeze, 'Who will show us any good?'

"And now the star of hope whose glimmerings were seen outside the gates of Eden, near where the angel waved his flaming sword, arises in the east to scatter o'er the world the lustre of his own refulgent beams, and lo, Immanuel lays aside His crown, and stoops to become a child of man. Mark those bright clarions of the sky, God's harbingers of peace! See, how before their trumpet blasts the angry clouds of vengeance are all rifted o'er to let the streaming glory through, and now they wholly disappear, and from the multitudes of the heavenly hosts, bathed in a sea of glory, is heard the notes of that triumphant song, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill to men.' But man, proud man, steeped in the darkness of centurial years of sin, now hates the light; and though the Sun of righteousness has risen, he madly shuts his eyes, lest some refulgent beam, striking upon his vision, should gain a final lodgment in his heart. Now, malice, envy, lust, and cruel hate, as the black clouds portend the coming of the storm, driven back, but not destroyed, draw once again the folds of their thick curtain round the world, as if to blind the all-seeing eye of Omniscience against their hideous plotting. See now along the dolorous way in front of Pilate's Hall of Judgment, passing through the Gate of Justice, a yelling multi-

tude, rending the tainted air with their foul, belching curse. See with them the Incarnate Son of God 'led as a lamb to slaughter.' And now they reach the gloomy hill of Calvary. See there erected betwixt heaven and earth the substance of those rugged, transverse beams whose shadows dim arose behind the altar of every sacrifice. There hangs the spotless Lamb of God. The glorious sun, and moon, and stars in mutual sympathy hold back their accustomed beams, while nature drops her thickest, darkest, gloomiest pall, and solid mountains, old as the ages, are rent in twain, convulsed by the powerful breath of their expiring Lord. Oh! listen to that last triumphant cry; it is as the shout of some brave conqueror when the field is won. See those attendant angels, rapt erewhile in silent consternation, catch up that last expiring cry, and swifter than the lightning's wing the tidings reach the sky, while shouts of, 'It is finished! It is finished!' reverberate through all the vaults of heaven. Thus God maintained the claims of His all-perfect attributes, and while multiplying his abundant mercy to a rebel world, taught the whole universe His utter hatred of transgression.

"Having thus briefly scanned those great events on which are hung the eternal destinies of all the human race, let us now glance at that great subdivision known as the 'Gallery of the Nations.'

"Thou seest that lofty pile which rises arch above arch, and terrace above terrace, surrounded on all sides with sloping walls of strong, rough masonry, as if to form a graduated highway to the skies, not built with granite stone, but with rude brick, all filled between and plastered o'er with pitchy bitumen gathered from slimy Vales of Siddim.

There is no richly carved entablature or massive dome, but the topmost storey is all strewn around with broken and disordered fragments everywhere, as if some desolating blast had spent its fury on it. The din of busy toilers no longer echoes through its winding concaves, but all is silent as the tomb. Now cast thine eye upon the plains below ; see there an anxious multitude gazing around in wildest consternation, mingled with dire confusion and uncertainty, each one forgetful of the name by which his mother called him, and all confounded by the babble which prevails around, as if the widest compass of discordant sound had bellowed in his ear ; and now each group, deprived of that co-operative power which common language gave, to different and to distant climes repair, and thus become the nucleus of those separate nations which now people the whole earth. Thus Providence defeated all the purposes of human pride and arrogance, and made an unwilling people glad to perform His high behests.

“ Now cast thine eye along that rich and fertile tract known as the Land of Ham ; there gorgeous palaces and cities rise in stately grandeur. Here art and science, brought from Assyria in their cradles, like two puking infants in their swaddling bands, were nourished and sustained until, as at the march of giant heroes, an admiring world fell prostrate at their feet. From hence went proud Sesostrius with his chosen legions, trained to hardship and inured to toil, gathering fresh trophies, and setting up the ensigns of his victories in every land, and then returning with the spoil of slaughtered kings, whose abject sons he had linked to his proud chariot wheels.

“See yonder race of careworn toilers, sweating beneath the scorching air which blows in sultry gales from Nubia’s sandy desert, impelled to drudgery and toil by the scorpion lash, held by the ruthless hand of tyranny. They were created in the likeness of humanity, but by oppression are degraded into beasts, while beasts of burden are set up and worshipped. See now that multitude, a million strong, all rescued from the tyrant’s iron grasp, amid great signs and wonders, and most splendid miracles, which struck dumb terror to the inmost heart of every proud oppressor, whelming them headlong in the foaming tide.

“Now look towards yonder land of peerless beauty, that earthly emblem of the rest which here remains firm as the eternal hills. Mark where her temple and her bulwarks rise; count all her palaces and towers; let thine eye feast upon her fertile plains, where olive trees and richest fruits abound, and honey pours all down the vine-clad hills, where all her sons are princes, and her daughters revel in a beauty kings might covet, and where obsequious ambassadors of mightiest nations wait in richest cavalcade to pour their choicest gifts. There dwell the chosen tribes of Israel’s race, that self-same nation whom erewhile we saw within the iron grasp of the oppressor.

“God had promised to their faithful father Abraham that He would make of them His chosen nation, and blessing them would bless all kindreds of the earth. But He foresaw they were a stiff-necked race, and so He taught them in the school of dire necessity those lessons of entire obedience to His will, without which all our

blessings are but curses in disguise. He taught them and the world by a hecatomb of offerings, with its attendant purifyings, that He who made and governed them could only be approached acceptably by hearts imbued with sense of moral purity—words little understood in those dark days and well-nigh obsolete.

“Now gaze with me on yonder splendid city, known upon earth as the ‘City of the Waters,’ and also called ‘The glory of the kingdoms and the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency.’ There stands the temple of proud Belus, with its gorgeous images of massy gold, built on that monument of human folly which pride and arrogance had long before set up by which they had aspired to climb to heaven. Within the midst, surrounded by a thick and massive wall, see yonder stately palace of earthly royalty and splendour, presenting in one view the accumulated wealth and spoils of the richest nations of the earth, all piled aloft in kingly grandeur by him who said, ‘I will exalt my throne above the stars; I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.’ But the Most High God who ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever He will, used all this splendour as a threshing-floor on which to humble the pride of nations; then brake it as a potter mars a distorted vessel on the wheel, and threw it to the dust from whence it came.

“Now let thine eye behold the last of those great dynasties whose power, and might, and grandeur found a centre within those splendid architectural piles where rose what men did proudly call ‘The Eternal City.’ There rides earth’s mightiest Conqueror, bearing in his

triumphal car, amid the wildest acclamations of the throng, the last of all the trophies he has won, the last of all the trophies earth could yield ; for he had waded through whole seas of blood, from conquest unto conquest, until every crown was prostrate at his feet, and every nation owed him their allegiance. There the foul fiend of war had no more darts to hurl, and proud ambition had now reached its highest pinnacle of fame and power. Men vainly thought these splendid conquests all their own, and knew not that this ‘ shaking of the nations,’ which by the mouth of holy prophets had been long foretold, was but the breath of the Omnipotent, at which the storms of battle all retired, and the whole world was hushed to calm repose. Thus Jehovah by His Almighty power and wisdom infinite wrought out of stormy turbulence and strife, and all the proud vainglorious of war, a ‘ highway for the royal chariot of the Prince of Peace.’ ”





BOOK IV.

THE ARGUMENT.—Memory conducting the Soul to Scenes of Past Years—The Gallery of Miniature Illustration—Pictures from the Life of Noah—The Building of the Ark amidst the Taunts of the Multitude—Doubt, hovering around the Heart, asks Questions of Distrust—Faith rests all secure in Heaven's Command—The Revellers—The Coming Storm—All Hope cut off—The World buried in the Surges of the Devouring Ocean—Pictures from the Life of Abraham—The Houseless Wanderer—The Loving Peacemaker—The Model Warrior—The Hospitable Prince—The Father of the Faithful and the Friend of God—Pictures from the Life of Job—Satan, dipping his Finger in the Gall of Envy, boldly declares in the Presence of the Almighty that all Job's Professions of Fidelity are but a painted Mask put on to serve his Worldly Interest—Satan receives Permission to tempt Job—Satan's Defeat and Job's Triumph—Pictures from a History of Modern Date.

THERE are times even in the earthly vale, when the spirit seems to burst the shroud of its mortality which girds it round, and, borne on Contemplation's wing, delights to live again amid those scenes which memory has preserved among her choicest treasures, and there it feasts within a world of ideality which it has created for itself, until some stern fact, startling it from its reverie, proves to a demonstration that life is not a dream, but an earnest, truthful, wonderful reality.

I had but just indulged in such a sweet, delicious meditation, when my heavenly guide once more began :—

“Thou wilt perceive, my dearest friend, that thou hast as yet but glanced upon this wondrous chronometer ; but let those great and glorious events on which thine eye has gazed be graven deeply on thy heart, and by them learn that all the ways of Providence, however hidden from created eyes, are wise and right. But think not that the Power which guides the spheres or ‘ puts its hook into the nose of loftiest nations, turning them whithersoever He will,’ is not equally attentive to the wants of every living thing, ‘ for all things do wait on Him, and He giveth them their meat in due season.’ Know also that every event in human life is big with lessons, which, if men would only stay to ponder, would lead them up to God.

“Let us now turn to the ‘ Gallery of Miniature Illustration,’ that, casting our eye here and there amid the teeming millions which surround, we may have some small conception of all that love and power which, while it governs the movements of the infinite, resides and acts as fully in the minute.

“Yonder behold a stately building. Its strength and vast dimensions, with its numerous compartments, fill every passer-by with strange bewilderment, for the world has never looked upon its like before. It has no broad foundation like all the other buildings which surround, but, resting upon a narrow keel, maintains its perpendicular by strong stays placed at an oblique angle all around. It seems to all a most uncommon habitation. And then its builder ;—old men and sages, long reported wise, nodding their heads, pronounce him mad, and men more moderate

and pitiful are filled with wonder at his idiosyncrasies, and they marvel more at the strange truths which he reveals, for every day he warns them faithfully of an evil day to come when the Omnipotent, for all their flagrant crimes, which, like a mountain huge, had swollen and reached to heaven, would send a desolating flood and sweep them all away. But scores of years pass by, and still destruction comes not, and long-protracted mercy only produces long-protracted obduracy. Many a cruel taunt falls on the ear of the dauntless man of God as plank on plank is reared into its resting-place and fastened. Sometimes a doubt does hover round his heart, and asks a hundred questions of distrust, and perchance may find an echo in the mouths of some who love him, 'Is there no mistake? If, as thou declarest, God intends this wide destruction to come upon the world, can He not provide a home for thee and all the remnant of creation in one of nature's fastnesses? Why should thy lifetime be consumed by so much drudgery and care? Cease thy vain, toilsome effort, and henceforth suffer not thy reason to be thus beguiled by those airy phantoms which await on dreams.' But faith, almighty faith, which nerves the arm to strike home every nail and bolt, rests in security on Heaven's all-wise commands, nor cares to trouble about questions curious. And now the building is complete, the tribes are housed, the builder and his family are all secure, for God hath shut them in. But the rains come not, day after day passes by, and not a cloud appears throughout the entire horizon. The hardened become more obdurate, the foolish drink still deeper draughts of folly. Now watch the heedless multitude as they tread the craggy

verge of danger with a veil before their eyes, dancing the dance of death, and now their wild huzzas against the madness of the prophet make all the valleys ring. But hark! the loud crash of distant thunder hushes every voice to silence, and the forked lightning's glare, revealing all the distant hills, is but the unwelcome harbinger of that terrific storm which sends a quivering palpitation straight to every heart. The merry timbrel drops from the unconscious hand of her who but just now fired the frantic footfalls of the revellers. The sons of Belial have suddenly forgot to mock, and all hearts quail with fear. But the storm rides on in all its dreadful fury, and the last strand of hope's strong cable is now severed, and every eye gazes instinctively upon the Ark, but all, alas! in vain, for the valley in which it rested has now become a wide-spread sea of waters, whose every yawning wave but echoes back the shrieks of wild despair which ride on every blast, and now the mountain torrents, gathering, as they come, increased velocity and power, unite their utmost forces to the surrounding devastation, each moken but intensifying their impetuosity, until they reach the rocky barrier, which, all affrighted at their fury, straightway bursts asunder, and form a highway for the roaring ocean to complete the general devastation. Thus our God rewarded the unflinching faith and steadfastness of His most righteous servant, and taught the world in every age that 'tis a dreadful thing to sin.

“Now let thine eye survey that little company of emigrants departing from yon eastern city. There stands the chief, surnamed the ‘Father of the Faithful,’ but more emphatically called ‘The Friend of God.’ The city gates

now close on them for ever. Is it because within those city walls there are no hearts to love? Or are their own hearts petrified to callousness that they seek some new abode where they may find reciprocated love? Ah, no. There throbs within that chieftain's breast a heart of broadest sympathies, which yearns upon the kindred whom he leaves behind. See even now a teardrop trembles in his eye; but in the secret chamber of that heart he hears a Voice dearer to him than all the ties of friendship earth could bind, which stirs his inmost nature to its deepest depth, "Get thee from thy country and kindred, and go into a land which I shall show thee." Swift as a hart, ere unbelief could parley with resolve, his willing feet are on the appointed track. He asks no map to guide, no passport to protect him on his way. The bare message is enough for him, for well he knows to God belongs the guidance of events, and though fierce dangers thicken round him upon every side his stout heart quails not. Ah, he has drank deep draughts at love's divinest fount—a love which so extinguishes all fear, that when the Almighty calls to sternest duty, no matter what the danger or the sacrifice, He finds him ready to fulfil His high commands.

"Now see him lift the olive branch of peace above the heads of those strife-making herdsmen, and not by words alone, but by most noble deeds of loving generosity settling their wide disputes.

"And now, behold, he arms himself for war, for yonder see injustice and strong might have drawn the sword against the weak and innocent, and placed in greatest peril those whom he loves. His eye looks not on the

overwhelming might of the invading foe, but only on the justice of the cause, well knowing that the Lord in whom he has put his trust can save by many or by few; so, gathering quick the force at his command, small and irregular, yet mighty in the use of arms, but mightier far in valour, like to some fiery bolt shot out from the tempestuous sky he sweeps upon the foe with such a sudden and resistless force as spread deep consternation and confusion through their numerous ranks, making resistance hopeless. See how he snatched the prey from out their very teeth, and wrought for helpless innocence a glorious victory. A most uncommon warrior, he counts the thanks of the oppressed a rich reward for all his toil and hazard, and so most freely gives up all the spoil.

“Now view him as the master of the feast which his kind hospitality provides for yon three weary travellers. He cares not to inquire about their rank, for their emergence is enough for him. Behold his simple banquet—the soft, green sward serves for velvet pile and table both. The woven shades of an old favourite tree, with here and there a tint of sky between, form a most pleasant canopy; here are no costly ceremonies or far-fetched luxuries, yet here are all the best ingredients of a feast, true, genuine politeness, simple, but wholesome fare, genial companionship, an honest appetite, and, better still, a hearty welcome. His generous heart asks nothing of the strangers in return, but a reward he asks not waits on him. His visitors were angels in disguise, sent down to reassure him that the promise of a son, so long delayed, is now at hand, and that his faith, and love, and true fidelity was not forgotten before God, but treasured up among the

choicest things in His remembrance ; and now, beyond what nature might have hoped, the promise is fulfilled : his dearly cherished wife (though long past age) brings forth the looked-for heir, the crown of all the gifts Heaven gave before, and pledge of every joy to come, and not to him alone, but unto all the kindreds of the earth. But mark how grief and disappointment dog the heels of all earth's highest hopes, for see, on yonder hill there lies outstretched, with limbs all bound, upon the altar pile, a human sacrifice ; there, with uplifted hands, clutching the fatal knife, our chieftain stands. One moment more and then the murderous plunge will be beyond recal. What secret spell can have impelled him thus to lift the assassin's arm against his own beloved son ? Three days before, that Voice, which once awoke the sympathies of all his heart, and led him to forsake his fatherland, had spoken once again, 'Take now thy son, thine only son, him whom thou lovest, and, lest affection countervails obedience, and get the upper hand of faith, lead him away from all the softening influences of home, even to Mount Moriah ; there offer him as a burnt offering, and let *thine own hand* plunge the sacrificial knife, and light the woody pile.' Oh ! it was agonising to perform a task so hard, but unendurable to disobey the will of Heaven. The fatal blow is aimed, but that same Voice calls louder than before, 'Lay not thine hand upon the lad, but take him to thine heart again, for I have found thee perfect in obedience.' Thus God made him the pattern of believers for all time, and taught the world that 'to obey is better than sacrifice.'

"See yonder, standing in most defiant attitude, that wicked spirit known as the 'Accuser of the Brethren.'

This is he who once made impious war in heaven, and monstrously defied Omnipotence; and not content with the allegiance extorted from the wretched multitude he has seduced, now concentrates his malice, hate, and guile to overthrow a chosen saint of the Most High, and daringly to assume to challenge the Almighty. Behold him with his finger dipped in gall of envy, pointing to that store of earthly good which God has so abundantly bestowed upon His chosen servant. He had long time been watching like a greedy wolf where he might make assault upon the battlements of that fair fame which girt the man of God on every side, like a strong tower impregnable. But all his foulest stratagems could not effect a breach, for God Himself among the assembly of His chosen sons declares His servant upright and free from guile, and even places him as a mirror of perfection for foul malignity to gaze upon, declaring there is none like him in all the earth. But the foul fiend replies with wily words insidious, 'I grant the mirror is without a spot, but Thou hast set it where no soil can blow upon it. What room is left for envy, hate, or discontent, where wealth in profusion, and all the honour which attends upon it, overflow the board? Hast thou not blessed him above all the race, placed him within the highest seat of fame, making his service in Thy cause redound to all his earthly interests? It were easy thus to serve. Grant me but leave to remove the hedge with which Thou hast entrenched him, Thyself shall then be witness that all his piety is but a painted mask to cover his hypocrisy.' Hear what the Almighty Father deigneth to reply: 'Foul fiend, 'tis not to gratify thy hatred or revenge, but to convince

the proud and arrogant that meekness, patience, obedience, humility, and all the graces which adorn an earthly child of heaven, receive no aliment from earthly greatness, though it may serve to lift them on a higher pedestal that cruel hate may take more deadly aim. I grant thee thy desire, and draw awhile from him and all he hath My high protecting hand; only his life be from thy violence free.' Now mark the gladness in that fiendish eye as he withdraws from the assembly of the sons of God to wreak his cruel vengeance on the innocent. See there his agents—whirlwind, robbery, and fire, with an unwonted haste, doing his fearful bidding, and in one short-lived day they bury sons, daughters, palaces, and servants in one heart-rending funeral. But see that man of God chastened, but not destroyed. The mirror is beclouded by the falling elements around, but those very elements hath served beyond compare to increase the lustre which had crowned his life before; the furnace has well tried but not destroyed the gold. And now, just like some gallant ship upon the topmost wave, amid the howlings of the storm, our chieftain rides secure, for he has cast his anchor on the Rock of Ages—a rock which all the powers of hell can never shake.

“These are a few ensamples which were here inscribed in ages long gone by, when the world was fresh and young. Now let us glance at one of modern date, that we may learn whatever changes may come over terrestrial things, God changes never; His goodness, truth, and love remain the same from age to age. We'll trace a history unknown to earthly fame, nor blazoned in the pedigree of her most favoured sons, yet graven here amid ten millions more, all

equally and yet diversely setting forth God's wondrous plan of mercy, love, and grace.

"See yonder smiling infant playing on the lap of her whose willing hand supplies its every want : a most mysterious dispensation hath deprived it of a mother's tender care. The all-wise God designed a work for that young child to accomplish in the world, but its fond mother's heart was far too weak to place it 'neath the rigorous training so indispensable for its most arduous task, and had she but remained its guardian, instead of a tall cedar of the forest, it had remained a sapling all its days. And so to accomplish His own wise designs, He saw it good to take the mother home to heaven. But those who watched it knew not of His purpose, and so were filled with wonderment that such a helpless thing should be so early wrecked upon the shore of time. See how it clasps its tiny hands, and with meek and tender eye looks up and breathes in pure, though broken accents, the blessed name of Jesus. But childhood passes by, and now he hears a thousand voices eagerly pronounce the holy name of 'Mother.' Oh ! magic name, sweeter than all earth's harmonies, awaking in the heart a chord of sympathies no other name can reach, calling up bitter tears from the rocky heart of many a sin-stained wanderer. Yet he knows not the mysterious power which dwells within that charming name. But see how eagerly he listens as one unfolds to him the welcome truth that *his* mother lives in heaven ! How breathlessly he asks, 'Oh, where is that blest country ? for I'm resolved, whatever be the toil or hazard, I will discover and pursue the track, nor rest until embraced within her loving arms.' And now in forests

wild, where human reason scatters her dead leaves of doubt and dire uncertainty, but yields no precious fruits of life and love, he lingers for a while, until, toilworn and despairing, he fears he never shall behold that better land, or see his mother's face. But see, those clouds which erring reason had so thickly hung around are reft asunder, and lo, one like unto the Son of God, hanging upon a cross, exclaims in voice of more than angel sweetness, 'Look unto Me and live. I am the Way, the Truth, the Life.' Now watch how hope lights up his eager eye, and joy and gladness settle on his heart, as, looking up to heaven, he cries, 'My Father, oh my Father! Thou shalt be the guide of my youth. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterwards receive me to glory.' God hears his high resolve, for he had breathed it from his heart's inmost chamber, breathed it in all honesty, although as yet he knows not all the discipline which it involved. But ah, how dark a night oft settles on fair morn! See yonder haunt of pleasure, where thousand gilded lamps reflect the hollow smiles and gaudy, flowing drapery of painted beauty—where the viol's notes mete out the zigzag movements of impulsive feet, where the fiery glass maddens the frenzied brain—there sits the youth who just now vowed that God should be his guide. One who had shared with him the hours of toil had long enticed with honeyed words, and promises of pleasure, unalloyed and exquisite, till, overcome by his powerful persuasion, he yields to make the trial. He did not see those pitfalls everywhere throughout the enchanted floor, which now, in heaven's own light, are so distinctly seen. His unsuspecting heart knew not that he was in the

precincts of the harlot's door, which leads straight down to hell ; nor did his eye, over which lust had cast her thinnest veil of gossamer, discern the multitude of guardian spirits pure (insensible to eyes of flesh) who watch with eagerness the steps of those who madly seek their own destruction, lest haply, in some moment of disappointment or despair, they may lead their hearts to penitence and virtue. But see, God's hand is now upon him, and he writhes upon a bed of pain, and there is war within his soul. God's great vicegerent, Conscience, has set up her lawful claims, reminding him of all those solemn vows which he had made before high Heaven, and now demanding payment to the full, and will not be put off with an instalment. And now, lest gaunt Despair should overcome the weakness of Resolve, that wondrous crucifix again appears ; then a voice, gentle as eventide in summer, came whispering, ' Return unto Me, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings ; I will receive you graciously ; I will love you freely after all that ye have done.' Mark now those tears of penitence and deep contrition, the outpourings of a heart of bitterness, but they are big with highest purpose and resolve ; and now he cries, ' Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee. Return, oh holy dove ; return, thou blessed Comforter, and make my heart Thy hallowed shrine for ever. My soul doth magnify and praise Thee for all the blessings of Thy providence and grace, but most of all for Thy chastising rod, for now I know Thou dost not willingly afflict Thy children, but only for their profit. Thou hast made me to know mine utter weakness, but with the knowledge Thou

dost show Thyself to be a never-failing source of strength. Therefore I will praise Thee as long as I have any being.' And now the clouds of sin and suffering all retire, for peace and love and joy have settled on his heart ; but the vain World, baffled and driven back (like the foul tempter of the wilderness), again appears, with all her smiles and blandishments, spreading before him all her richest stores. See glittering Wealth, hovering with gaudy plume but short uncertain wing, opening her largest coffers to attract his gaze. See swift-winged Fame spreading her toils before her unsuspecting votaries, like as the cunning spider spreads its artful web. See Honour waiting to hang upon his brow her freshest laurel wreath ; and there the mystic voice of love spreads out her thousand charms. See Knowledge lifts the covering of her learned lore, inviting every passer-by to taste, and many stop and drink down deepest draughts from her alluring fount, but, failing to take hold on Wisdom (that power by which all knowledge is digested and assimilated), they perish by their own unmitigated folly, and too late they learn that knowledge, though the source of power, yet apart from wisdom is but the power of the strong and deadly executioner. Mark how his eye rekindles at these dazzling charms, but his now chastened heart has not forgotten the deep traces which false pleasure had engraven there, and, trembling at the thought of trusting it again, he chooses Wisdom for his guide—that wisdom which cometh from above, around which clusters all that makes life worth the caring for, and, having this, he asks no higher good. Now see that beauteous group around the hymeneal altar. There stands our youth and his most blooming bride.

Other fair maidens, who seemed to him the very image of himself, had all been wooed in vain, but wisdom had now taught him that a partner meet to share his cares and joys must be the counterpart of his own self, so that what each might lack the other might supply, and thus the two hearts made separate at the first by mutual sympathy might grow up into one. Such heart he sought and found, and Heaven approved the choice, and blessed him in his deed. She was his guardian angel, watching his every step along the dangerous tracks of time, always ready with her loving, wise precautions, not wishing to command, but rather wisely and more powerfully to suggest; and when deep trouble came, oh, how he joyed to lay his aching head upon her loving breast until new courage came to face the blast again! But trials (the common lot of all God's dearest children) from every side came thick upon him. Death entered his abode, and one by one he snatched the pledges of his love away, and all his schemes of worldly wealth which he had fondly hoped that wisdom and prudence had mapped out for him failed most utterly, and left him nought on earth to wish for or desire; and so, after a life of hardship in the cause of God, his country, and the world, God took him home, and now, in the light of heaven, he learns that all his cherished schemes of worldly wealth were only broken reeds his soul set up from time to time to lean upon; so God most wisely cut them all away that he might learn to lean on Him whose mighty arms sustain the pillars of the universe.

"Now let us leave these beauteous bowers, and when thou hast put off thy frail mortality, and an infinity of bliss lies spread before thee, having no veil of flesh

between, then shalt thou have leisure to renew these most delightful studies. But this remember, that however deep the tracks of wisdom, love, or power thou mayest discover, yet illimitable depths must still evade thine utmost grasp to all eternity."





BOOK V.

THE ARGUMENT.—Farewell to the Bowers of Paradise—Curious Questions—No Temple of Prayer in Heaven—An Emblematic Garden of Delights—The Palace of Beneficence—The Chamber of Debate—"Albert the Good" presiding over the Discussions of a vast Company of Philanthropists from every Nation under Heaven, assembled to debate how they may ameliorate Human Suffering—"Albert the Good:" a Sketch—A Few more Sketches—Alfred the Great—Lucius Seneca—Abraham Lincoln—John Howard—John Pounds—John Frederic Oberlin—Father Mathew—The President's Valedictory Address.

EARTH has ten thousand spots of loveliness, however drear the wilderness between, but all her most enchanting scenes are planted everywhere with sad regrets. But heaven knows no regret, for there, however great the pleasures in possession, they only pave the way to higher joys. I therefore left these blooming bowers without one pang of sorrow or regret, and joyfully accompanied my heavenly guide through other scenes of ever new delight spread out continuously before us as we urged our pleasant way along the beauteous avenues which lead to the Palace of Beneficence. But every scene evoking new inquiry I feared at first to ply with curious questions. My heavenly guide discovering my diffidence cried, "Courage, friend, nor

fear to push inquiry, for remember that within the precincts of this happy place mutual inquiry ever rewards with mutual response ; just as the precious seed which in order to become fruitful must be scattered on the soil, so knowledge diffused returns to him who sowed a hundred-fold." Emboldened thus I quick replied, "Thou hast most cheerfully (and the more kindly because unasked) indulged my curiosity to know and see the wonders of this glorious place ; grant now that I may feast my eyes (if I again may be indulged) with the sight of that glorious temple where the prayers of the glorified are offered. Methinks petitions pure, and free from sin and selfishness as theirs, can never fail an answer." To which my guide in gracious words replied, "There is no temple for the voice of prayer in heaven, for, as thou seest, our wants are all most graciously anticipated, so that all prayer is most gloriously superseded by eternal songs of praise." Again I ventured to suggest : "Thou speakest of these glorious abodes as if they were designed to be co-existent in duration with the eternal throne of God ; I would, therefore, gladly learn the secret of this immutability, for on earth all things (like the earth herself) are given to change and subject to decay." To which my smiling guide replied, "Thou seest the buildings here are cut in the living rock, and all the air of heaven is pregnant with immortality, and where no death is there can be no decay. But see, we have passed these charming avenues, and yonder stands the palace we have come to seek. Let us now enter its most beauteous garden of delights, and feast our eyes upon its luxuriant trees and shrubs and flowers—all emblematic of the stately palace reared within the midst.

See yonder sweet Clematis, clasping its tendrils round the lovely Honeysuckle in most fond embrace, forming those most charming bowers where *moral beauty* blends with *purest love*. See Arbor Vitæ, emblem of *unchanging friendship*, aspiring to blend its angular foliage of brightest green with the majestic Cedar, emblem of *strength* and *constancy never to be corrupted*, and Balm (surpassing far-famed Gilead's) dropping sweet tears of *sympathy*. There's Frankincense, that emblem of a *faithful heart*, rarely blossoming in mortal soil, but growing here in rich luxuriance. See sweetest Myrrh, scattering her *gladness* upon every gale; and lovely Mallow, trampled under foot on earth, blooms here in native soil in all the beauty of its own *beneficence*. And here the tiny Snowdrop sends up its petals of *pure consolation*, and there Camelia, dressed in all its ever-living green, blossoms in *unpretended excellence*, while every Myrtle shade preserves its fresh remembrances of *loves* left in the wilderness of time, *absent* but not *forgotten*. And yonder, in the midst towering above them all, rises the far-famed Palace of Beneficence, not gorgeous in ornament, but solid and stately; not redundant, yet classic, pure, and chaste; and, like the beauteous garden which surrounds it, fit emblem of the deeds transacted there. Our time forbids us to explore its noble chambers, halls, and corridors; but let us take our seats awhile within the Chamber of Debate, where thou wilt soon discover that those pure and happy spirits who have escaped the corruption of the world are not unmindful of the comrades they have left behind."

Passing the portals, where a semicircular arch, whose abutments rested on the native rock, spanned the ample

entrance, we soon were seated in a sumptuous hall known as the Senate House or Chamber of Debate. Here we beheld a vast multitude gathered from every land, whose lofty brows and mild pacific eyes were a true index of that love and pity which sat enthroned on every heart. These were assembled to debate if by some means they might ameliorate those fearful ravages which sin, in its ten thousand forms, still scatters o'er the earth, that so, while instruments of good to others, they may augment their own already overflowing cup of joy. We found the session well-nigh ended, and the whole company were spending a sweet interval in social interchange of precious thoughts, until the President should pronounce the valedictory address which would dismiss them to their arduous but self-elected and most pleasant toil.

Seeing this interval, my guide (always intent to seize on every opportunity of gaining or imparting knowledge), turning to me, thus spake: "I will not stay, my friend, to enumerate those objects which never fail to draw so large and loving an assemblage to this place, as doubtless thou wilt gather these from him who for this session has been chosen to preside over the high debates of this deliberative assembly, whose pleasant voice we soon may hope to hear. This blessed spirit now so highly honoured, though not more honoured than esteemed, is but a late arrival from the earth, where he is still remembered as 'Albert the Good,' and, perchance, with many others, may be known to thee, if not by sight, at least by fame's report, and I will gladly learn of thee some of their antecedents. Dost thou not know our goodly President?" To which I modestly replied, "If inclination needed any impulse to

give thee pleasure surely my obligation would supply the lack ; therefore, not willingly alone, but cheerfully and gladly, I comply. 'Albert the Good' was known on earth, not only by the royal titles which to him by right belonged (which in themselves were light as air to him), but he was better known by great and virtuous deeds. He had a truly noble soul, to which his face did correspond, as in a faithful mirror, and, like his movements, everywhere reflected dignity, and grace, and purest love combined. His language was the truth personified ; his sole endeavour was not how he might be great, but always how he might be useful, well knowing that what in the world's esteem was called greatness was often but an accident (excuse that word), while usefulness could only be attained by arduous pursuit. Time was to him so precious that redundancy was impossible. He was a master in the art of brevity, but his was the brevity of highest condensation, like the essential oil the alchymist retains, and casts the dross away. In him there dwelt a soul of tenderness, not easily offended, and never needlessly giving an offence. In criticism, whether upon human skill or conduct, he was always generous, kind, and just, never refusing the protection due to honest merit, in whatever soil it might have been born or nourished, yet always giving to sluggishness its demerit and desert. His was a mind of quiet comprehensiveness, which, not content to dive into the depths of nature with all the sounding-lines which science and art could furnish, but, if needs be, to follow her into the inmost chambers of her own fastnesses, and wresting from her grasp the key of all her treasures, to pour them out upon a needy world.

His heart was broad as the atmosphere which girt him round, and so free from party bigotry, that, like an eminent evangelist, he might have truly said, 'The world is my parish, and every man my brother.' His noble soul was cast in freedom's mould, and never was distorted from the shape which nature made it; abhorring all the arts of flattering sycophancy, it braved the honest truth, and bid defiance to the breath of slander, whatever malignant shape it might assume. His was a mind in difficulty's school well taught, and there he had taken many a degree for which diplomas are not granted; difficulties to him were but incentives, which urged on to pursuit through all the intricate paths of knowledge; so when gaunt dangers came which scared most other men, they found him calm and ready. In all those tender affections which entwined themselves around his truly happy home, his noble nature was the sun which gave them light and heat, his mind the gentle hand which shaped their growth. He drew large draughts from the fountain of divine love and happiness, and threw them, broadcast, in most gentle showers on all around. He was the Sovereign of all the Sovereigns of the Earth, and that Royal heart who mourns him now can never more be comforted until she (exchanging time for immortality) is placed for evermore within his loving, tender, fond embrace."

I scarce had finished, when my guide, casting on me a gaze of mingled satisfaction and delight, replied, "My well-beloved friend, I clearly see that the story of the life which thou hast just briefly sketched is no common history, and thou wilt not wonder that Heaven so readily

endorsed the title which came echoing from earth with the convoy of angels as they brought him here, not only from the mansions of the great, but also from the dwellings of the poor. for 'Albert the Good' is what the angels call him.

"Thou seest yon smiling group just underneath that canopy of rich bal-duchin ; there sits Samuel, the faithful prophet, and next him Nehemiah, that zealous patriot of Israel's race; and there sits pensive Jeremiah, known upon earth as the weeping Prophet; and there is Dorcas, the widows' and the orphans' friend, by whose powerful pleadings she was called back from Paradise to dwell once more awhile in her clay tenement, till God sent forth a fresh angelic convoy to bring her here. Of these I need not ask thee, for their honoured names are chronicled within the Book of Truth. But there is one among that group of kingly bearing, known upon earth by the high-sounding title of 'Alfred the Great,' but remembered better, and more esteemed as the 'Father of his People;' and next him sits that heathen sage known by the name of Seneca, and next to him that earnest spirit lately come from earth, where he was recognised as the 'Slaves' Avenger;' and there sits one whom earth delights to call her 'Great Philanthropist,' joining in sweet discourse with him whom some nicknamed the 'Cobbler,' but whom 'honesty' did call the 'Friend of the Ragged Poor;' and there sits Oberlin, sweetly exchanging thoughts with that good priest known as the 'Patriot of the Emerald Isle;' and there are thousands more among this happy throng whose story would delight me much; but, if thou wilt afford the briefest sketch of those I have

just pointed out, I will consider myself again thy debtor." To which I cheerfully replied, "Oh, do not speak of thine indebtedness to me, who never can repay for all thy kindnesses; but if aught which I can give should prove acceptable to thee, myself shall feel that thine acceptance of so poor a gift confers, and not receives the obligation.

" 'Alfred the Great' was truly, as thou sayest, the Father of his People; he found them girt on all sides round with strong, malicious enemies, while ignorance, and strife, and barbarous injustice (foes far more deadly) revelled in the midst; but by tempering bold enterprise with cool deliberation, he drove back the daring foe, and rid the nation from their cruel yoke. Then, with a prescience which dives into the inmost depth of things, he saw his people's weaknesses and wants, and his strong love of right and justice, marked by a marvellous capacity to execute, made knowledge, literature, and peace to flourish, and right and truth and pure religion to be revered. He kindled such a flame within the lovely isle of Britain as never shall be quenched.

" Lucius Seneca was one of earth's philosophers, famed for his prodigious stores of wealth, which lay all scattered throughout every land; but his name is far more cherished for his love of truth. He felt an utter hatred to the vices which abounded at the royal court where he was called to sit, and he was far too honest for its mean intrigues; so that monster tyrant whom in the tender years of childhood he had striven to train in all the noble principles of truth and virtue offered him up a sacrifice to his fell jealousy and hate.

" That earnest spirit but lately called from earth is one

of Nature's own nobility, schooled in adversity, and well trained to toil, but better far to righteousness and truth. His heart clave to the right, and deep abhorred the wrong, and when his eye looked on oppression his heart was moved to bitter tears of sympathy. Men mocked when he was called to regulate the counsels of the Senate, and to sit in judgment on that monster of human villainies, which, as a cankerworm, consumed the vitals of the State, and threatened to annihilate the nation. Fools jesting called him 'Rail-splitter,' because he worked in wood ; but his strong arm which clave the giant of the forest, backed by the stronger will of a most noble people, struck every galling fetter from the tawny sons of Ham ; and then, like a gallant ship, with its flag of victory unfurled upon the topmost mast, sunk in the yawning tide by the last desperate shot of the retreating foe.

"Earth's great philanthropist was called of God to traverse the tortuous unbeaten path which leads to those dark dungeons where human suffering and wretchedness send up their deepest wail of sorrow, where guilt and misery, in their most horrid forms, fill all the air with their pestiferous breath. From land to land he travelled, not to gather the laurels of a bloody victory, nor to reflect the splendours of a bygone age by rescuing from the tomb of dark oblivion their monuments of chivalry or art, but to stretch out the measuring line of sympathy over most cruel suffering and bitter woe, that by exposing it in all its foul enormity, he might melt down from off the world that iceberg of indifference in which its heart had been so long imbedded, and send a ray of hope through all the caverns of despair. He thought no toils too heavy, and

no task too hard ; his eye looked only on the duty, the danger it scorned to see, and when Death came he found him battling with the foe.

“ That cobbler was a meek, decrepid son of toil, but in his lowly breast there beat a royal heart which, when it looked on ignorance and vice and poverty, crowding in every path, could not pass by upon the other side. He had a soul of goodness which only looked upon the helplessness of the helpless, and did not wait for patronage. His own dire poverty compelled him every hour to shape the shoe the price of which would shape his frugal meal, and all the while he strove to shape the minds of shoeless vagrant boys around his humble door. He had no crowded shop of merchandise, but troops of ragged children crowded round his boarded hut to pick up crumbs of knowledge. His school benches were old boxes, his primers were the placards which trade and commerce strewn around, but from his little hut, which served for workshop and for college both, there issued forth a flame of bright benevolence which lighted every city of the empire, and raised asylums for the long-neglected outcasts of the poor, whose only passport for admission was their utter wretchedness and destitution, and when the angels sought for him they found him in the harness, and brought him home without a moment’s warning.

“ Oberlin was a bright star set up in the midst of self-inflicted darkness, misery, and woe ; and though he wore the priestly robe, he thought it no disgrace to instruct the ignorant and debased how by industry and frugal care to mend their fortunes and their lives. And when his kind persuasion and advice was met by rudest obloquy and

bitter scorn, his own right arm, backed by a courage which laughed at impossibilities, brought down the heavy mattock on the stubborn soil, and made a common highway for commerce and all the blessings following from social intercourse and highest civilisation—a bold example which raised the tinge of shame on many a cheek and carved a lodgment for the truth in many a heart. And when, after long years of arduous toil, the Master sent to take him home, and men bare his body to its quiet resting-place, thousands who mourned his loss exclaimed in voice of bitter grief, ‘A great chief has fallen on the field to-day.’

“That patriot priest, born in the Emerald Isle, possessed a heart which had long lamented over the distractions of his unhappy country, so deeply sunk in poverty and wretchedness and foulest crime which governments by penal acts had sought for ages to wipe out but sought in vain. Their sounding line reached not the people’s hearts; at best they only soothed the festering sore till it had gathered strength to renew with increased virulence the attack. But his sharp, piercing eye looked deeper down; he saw a fiery stream issuing from the fatal still which constantly supplied the vital aliment to keep alive the misery and ignorance and crime which, as a hungry demon, revelled in the midst. Like a giant warrior he went forth from conquest unto conquest till vice and crime and those who fattened on it trembled in their own citadels—dark, dreary dens, where prisoners had heaved deep sighs for ages were left without a tenant, and deep silence reigned through all their gloomy corridors. Alas! for that unhappy land, just at the time when he bid fair to

become the healer of his country, his weak humanity broke down beneath the herculean task, and left successors far too feeble to carry on the work."

"Most cordial thanks," my guide exclaimed, "for these few pleasant sketches of earth's favoured sons. I could for ever feast on such delights; but, hark! the trumpet sounds—our noble President now rises to deliver the address. See every face upturned and every ear attent;" and as my own rapt eye gazed once again upon that placid face, so beautiful on earth that once to look upon it was to have it photographed upon the heart for ever, and as my eager tongue cried out, "'Tis he, 'tis he," the mellow tones of his enrapturing voice thus fell upon mine ear: * "*Most worthy senators and brethren, our heavenly Father in His boundless goodness has made His creatures that they should be happy, and in His wisdom has fitted His means to His ends, giving to them all different qualities and faculties, in using and developing which they fulfil their destiny, and, running their uniform course according to His prescription, they find that happiness which He has intended for them. Man alone is born into the world with faculties far nobler than the other creatures, reflecting the image of Him who has willed that there should be beings on earth to know and worship Him. And though fallen into most severe relapse from that primæval purity and power in which he was at first created, yet, being endowed with the power of self-determination, and having revelation superadded to his reason, with Divine assurance of all needful help, he can, even now, develop his faculties, place himself in harmony with*

* The lines in italics are copied from the published speeches of the late Prince Consort.

his Divine prototype, and attain that happiness which is offered to him on earth, to be completed hereafter in entire union with Him through the mercy of Christ. But he can also leave these faculties unimproved, and miss his mission on earth. He will then sink to the level of the lower animals, forfeit his happiness, and separate from his God whom he did know how to find. He has no right to throw off the task which is laid upon him for his happiness. It is his duty to fulfil his mission to the utmost of his power. But he is placed under adverse influences, there being in him a nature which sees the right, and yet pursues the wrong—a judgment which approves what is excellent without any will to seek after it. It is our privilege, whom Providence has removed from this awful struggle, and placed beyond this fearful danger, increasingly to aid, as far as in us lie, by those secret influences and ministrations which, though silent and unseen, are nevertheless continually working, day after day, upon a sinful world. I look upon this vast assembly (a part of the Almighty's ministering host) as a token of hope and future blessedness to that world upon whose happiness our hearts are set, the furtherance of whose interests is our one constant, holy, and common object, being well assured that (in accordance with the promise of our Divine and glorious Lord) 'whoso giveth a cup of water in the name of a disciple shall in no wise lose his reward.' The blessings which the Almighty Father has bestowed upon all his intelligent creatures can only be realised by them in proportion to the help which they are prepared to render each other by peace, love, and ready assistance; not only between individuals, but also between nations

and communities. And if this principle applies to earth (as it most certainly does) amid all its imperfection and weakness, how much more to us to whom all labour is holy, and all toil is lost in most delightful interchange of glorious occupation; the only rest immortals ever seek. And for our encouragement let us remember *that a principle of good, once sown, is not designed to be dormant, but, like the grain of mustard-seed, it is calculated to extend and develop itself in an ever-increasing sphere of usefulness.* I will not say anything in confirmation of this truth, for your own devoted labours in time past will, I am sure, best supply you with abundant illustration. It is a matter for great gladness, and no less for gratitude, that, removed as we are from visible contact with the world from which we came, yet there are avenues to the human heart to which we have access; and though it is not our province to command, yet having the power to suggest and persuade, let it be our endeavour to apply these advantages, with which an Almighty Providence has favoured us, to the highest use within our power, so that such counsels shall prevail, such laws may be enacted, and such examples of purity and love be maintained as shall, on every side, to general good conduce; that each one, even the weakest, may derive that strength which shall enable him to do the right and battle with the wrong; so to develop those faculties by which alone he can fulfil the mission of his life on earth as finally to attain these mansions of delight and blessedness. I will not now recall the magnitude of our past efforts, or their great results—let but thought thereof become a stimulant to higher and nobler service. Let each success be only

viewed as an instalment of that grand termination which must surely follow. May the God of all grace and power give us success commensurate with our highest aims—success so overflowing that while it shall enlarge and fill our own capacity of bliss by the bringing many sons to glory, shall evermore redound to His most worthy praise who loved us, and gave His precious life a ransom for us.”





BOOK VI.

THE ARGUMENT.—Farewell to the Palace of Beneficence—The Power of Words fitly Chosen—The Latent Existence of Truth—The Selfishness which overreaches Itself—Heaven a Commonwealth—The only Highway to Happiness—The Banqueting Halls of Heaven and Earth contrasted—A Visit to the Banqueting Hall of Heaven—Human Language too feeble to describe the Glory of the Place—The Banquet—A Glorious and Happy Company—The True Graces and Ingredients of a Feast—Glorious Harmony—The Song of All-redeeming Love—John the beloved Disciple briefly rehearses the Story of the Cross—Paul rehearses his Persecuting Career, and claims no other Title but the “Chief of Sinners”—Peter relates how he, a Rebel, was brought back to his Allegiance—The Story of Manasseh—David, the Invincible, conquered by the Power of Lust—Adam’s Experience and Song of Praise—The Whole Company retire to the Temple of Worship—My Heavenly Guide’s Tender Farewell.

WITH slow and measured step we left the Senate House, and urged our way amid the devious but pleasant paths which intersect the Emblematic Garden of Delights around the beauteous palace as before described. Here we were fain to linger for awhile, discoursing much, but musing more upon those wondrous words which had so late beguiled our ears. Words in themselves are light, fantastic things, which, like the bubble on the wave, expire as soon as born ; but, when fitly chosen, they become the vehicles

of thought so mighty that the weal or woe of kingdoms hang upon their breath, or imbedded within their marvellous enclosure may be found such giant truths as may require the united wisdom of long ages to eliminate. Such were the chosen words which reached the hearts of all within that glorious Chamber of Debate, where all had sat like souls deliciously entranced ; and now, casting on my guide a gaze of meek simplicity, I eagerly exclaimed, " Oh, tell me more of those new truths on which mine ear has hung with highest ecstasy, while deep astonishment my wondering mind has filled. On earth we often hear of the dignity and usefulness of labour, but where shall earth, throughout her widest fields of thought and illustration, find words all-adequate to explain how interchange of never-ceasing toil and occupation brings most cheering rest ? " To which my guide most cheerfully replied, " New thoughts, new truths, and new inventions are but terms of accommodation which earth sets up to supply the lack of her most limited vocabularies, forgetful that all truth, whether in relation to the physical laws of nature or those higher laws of mind which govern all intelligent existences, is old as eternity. Before created intelligences began to be, all truths lay buried beneath the abysses of the universe, from whence, as time rolled on, they have been dug, and from age to age brought to the daylight of science and revelation, and placed in the fiery crucible of investigation, that they might bear the part assigned to them in God's great universal government. Do not wonder, then, that in a world where selfishness so covetously overreaches its own self, and oft defeats its own most cherished purpose, that there should be no lodging-

place for truths so heavenly as those on which thou seekest some enlightenment. But know that heaven being literally a commonwealth, where every wish is gratified and all desire is crowned with fullest realisation, there is no room for covetousness, and while all are most completely happy, yet there is illimitable space for higher growth. But God, who is great in wisdom as in love, has made but one highway to its requirement ; for He has so constituted all beings of created intelligence that, as the sun which holds not in infinite refraction its own essential beams, nor shines to glorify itself, but scatters its bright beams throughout creation, that all within the circumference of its glorious influence may clap their hands with gladness, so mind, when pure, cannot be selfish, but, like the source of true benevolence from whence it sprang, scatters around the bounties of His wisdom, love, and grace.

“ But time forbids our longer lingering here, and there is yet one other scene of ravishment which I am permitted to unveil, and then my limited but most delightful task will be complete, and thou shalt leave these bowers of bliss again to mingle with the scenes of earth, until the welcome plaudit shall be heard, ‘ Well done.’ ”

“ Now cast thine eye on yonder banquet halls.” “ Have pity on my weakness,” I replied, “ but the variety of charming sounds which here commingle, alighting with concentrated power upon mine outward ear, must have disturbed the functions of my auditory nerve ; there surely are no banquet halls in heaven ; on earth they rise in swarms pestiferous, where vice, and crime, and lust, and all hell’s legions are let loose to riot day and night, and doles of liquid fire are dribbled out for gain, and human souls

are slaughtered for the love of pelf. There Belial and Mammon in firm phalanx joined hold undisputed sway, and needy governments are not ashamed to fatten on the spoil ; and oh ! let it not be known in Heaven—lest Heaven should veil herself in thickest sackcloth—that Heirs of Glory pass supinely by, and raise no warning voice ; nay, many with the shining lamp of life within their hand can clutch the tempting gain, and myriads of these brilliant lamps are dimmed or quite extinguished.” To which my guide in accents sweet replied, “Thou speakest of the banquet halls of hell, where the Gin Fiend holds his orgies ; while the bitter sigh of the lonely widow and the flooding tear of the perishing orphan send up their wailing cries to heaven, ‘How long, oh Lord, how long ?’ But know, and let it comfort thee, that these dark days are numbered. In ages past men madly called this liquid death ‘pure aqua vitæ,’ a panacea for all the ills of human life ; but the time of all this ignorance God winked at, and now purer light has dawned upon the world, and the time hastens (God speed the day) when from the halls of science and religion the lustre of that light shall shine with such intensity that every cloud of sin and ignorance shall be dispersed, and righteousness shall cover as a garment all the earth ; then shall the angels shout, ‘The world is free.’ But such are not the banquet halls of heaven ; here every spirit of evil is quite shut out, and all our banquet halls are halls of love ; we feast on pure ambrosial fruits, and drink the nectarous juice fresh pressed from the golden clusters bright and clear which hang in wide profusion throughout all the bowers and groves which everywhere abound in this

delightful garden of our God ; we quaff the refreshing fountain streams which everywhere well up fresh from the River of Life ; we sing the songs of all-redeeming love, till all our souls are tuned to highest rapture and delight. But hark ! those sounds of sweet, mellifluous harmony which now come floating on the balmy air denote the banquet has begun. Let us, therefore, hastily survey these scenes of ever new delight which crowd the precincts of these glorious halls and palaces ere we feast amid the soul-inspiring revelries which evermore abound within those hallowed walls." The numerous approaches to these beauteous edifices were strewn on every hand with trees, and shrubs, and flowers of rarest beauty, diffusing choicest fragrance all around. Here grows the Rose of Sharon in its native soil ; here the modest lily, shrouding its delicately-tinted petals within its own lovely coats of green, holds captive for a moment every passer-by. Here spikenard, cassia, frankincense, and myrrh, and all the richest spiceries of celestial groves, unaided by the cruciating fires of alchemy, crowd every passing gale with rich perfume. But all these scenes of beauty are only as the framework prepared by some skilful lapidary to receive the priceless gem which sparkles in the monarch's crown ; for every part of these most gorgeous palaces reflects so radiantly the all-perfect wisdom, skill, and power of Him by whose almighty word they were upreared, that highest powers of language or of thought are baffled to depict them.

" Rich as some fane by lavish zealots reared
For the proud banquet stood the hall prepared ;
Thick golden plates the latent beams enfold,
And the high roof was fretted o'er with gold ;

Of solid marble all the walls were made,
And onyx e'en the meanest floor inlaid ;
While porphyry and agate round the court
In massy columns rose, a proud support ;
Of solid ebony each post was wrought
From swarthy Meroë profusely brought ;
With ivory was the entrance crusted o'er,
And polished tortoise hid each shining door,
While on the cloudy spots enchased was seen
The lively emerald's never-fading green."

On entering this most noble place we passed beneath a massive triple arch, upon whose keystones severally were inscribed these words of Holy Writ, "Come, for all things are now ready," "He that is athirst come," "Whosoever will let him come and partake of the water of life freely"—language quite familiar upon earth, though little understood, for words of welcome there are oft but empty sounds mechanically made by earthen vessels void of life and heart; and, entering in, we saw, on softest seats reclined, a multitude innumerable, whose countenances shone with ecstasy, reflecting hearts at ease and filled with joy. Before them was outspread a banquet worthy of Him who gave it, where rich variety did grace, and endless plenty crown the flowing board. Here was no vain and ceremonious compliment, no garb of empty sentimentalism, put on but to disguise the rottenness at heart; but here the graces and ingredients of a feast met hand in hand and heart with heart, till every soul was filled and ravished with divinest ecstasy and love; and now, when rich exuberance had waited on keen appetite, and many of the choicest viands had been cleared, came on what might with truth be called "the feast of reason and the flow of soul." The whole assembly

rose and sang in sweetest harmony, which floated from aisle to aisle, from porch to porch, and dome to dome, till it reverberated all around :—

“Unto Him who is the Faithful Witness and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the Kings of the earth,—unto Him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood,—and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father—to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” And I saw in the midst a throne of solid gold, all garnished o’er with gems exceeding precious ; here sat the presiding Elder of the feast, who now arose amid the cheerful greetings of the throng ; and casting round an eye which beamed with purest love, in tenderest tones of gentleness he thus began :—

“Dearly beloved, let us love one another. Again we meet within these glorious and resplendent halls, made beautiful by reason of that finished splendour and magnificence which He who loved us hath cast in such profusion all around, but lovelier far by that effulgent glory which His redeeming love reflects on every heart. We meet not to recite the tales of earthly chivalry, and war, and blood, but to rehearse the melting story of a Saviour’s love, to call to mind the victories of His cross—that wondrous cross by which we were delivered from the bondage of corruption, and we, who were the slaves of sin, led captive by the devil at his will, were made the sons of God, and heirs of this most glorious inheritance ; and hereby know we that we are the sons of God, because we have passed from death unto life. But what was I that I should be a witness of His love, to testify the marvels of His passion

to the end of time, and in these glorious halls the theme renew? I was on earth a chosen vessel of His love, and privileged beyond all others of the race—the chosen one among the chosen few, favoured to lie upon His loving breast. I saw Him in the radiant cloud when for a moment He put off the mortal garb of flesh and clothed Himself in all the splendours of His own glorious divinity, and, like a brave warrior on the battle's morn, spake of the death which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. I saw Him in His mortal agony when 'on Him lay the iniquity of us all,' when all the powers of His pure human nature trembled beneath the weight of our accumulated guilt; and when a world of culprits stood condemned before the bar of Justice, whose demands were death or satisfaction, He seized the bitter draught from every hand and drank it to the dregs. I saw Him bound by officers of state whom one meek word sent trembling to the ground no more to rise till His permission gave them back the power. I saw Him in the palace of the Jews' high priest, derided, mocked, and scorned, and when pride, and mockery, and cruel hate had no more insults left to heap upon Him, thence led, a captive bound, to Pilate's bar, I heard that pseudo-judge, all trembling like a leaf beneath the blasts which thickened on him upon every side, pronounce Him innocent, and yet condemn Him as a criminal not fit to live to the most shameful ignominious death. My soul did smart beneath the lash which tore His mangled frame. These ears were pierced with blasphemies unheard-of in the universe before—'His blood be upon us and upon our children for ever;' 'He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God.' I saw Him nailed upon the cursed

tree, and lifted betwixt heaven and earth, a spectacle of shame and grief, a mark for all the shafts of irony and bitter scorn, on which the sun refused to shed his light, but veiled himself in thickest clouds of darkness. I listened to that bitter wail at which all Hell revived and Heaven did weep—‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani.’ I heard that last loud cry, as one which comes from some dismantled ship, fast sinking as the victory is gained—‘It is finished,’ and he yielded up the ghost. I saw Him bound a victim to the triumphal car of Death, and placed beneath strong guards within the walls of his dark citadel, from which by His own might He rose, threw back the massive bolts, and triumphed gloriously over all His foes, and as He rose in His victorious car, again to reign on His right royal throne, amid the shouts of all the heavenly ranks who waited for Him at the city gates, He took my heart away and kept it here until my mission upon earth was done. Behold, then, my brethren, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us. Beloved, let us love one another. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. We love Him because He first loved us. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him, for ‘God is love.’ Let those who have had most forgiven e’er love Him most, and while each vies with each to extol the wonders of His all-redeeming grace, our souls shall be enlarged and all on fire by such a glorious and inspiring rivalry.”

Scarce had he finished when, amid the bursting shouts of “Hallelujah!” which echoed and re-echoed all around,

a mighty spirit, at whose matchless zeal and flowing eloquence thousands had lit their lamps of spiritual life, and whose voice, though hushed on earth for ages, yet speaks with increased energy and power, whose tender eye, now kindled with the mighty thoughts which struggled in his breast for utterance, and with a face which glowed with hallowed fire, he thus began :—

“Brethren, my heart is inditing a good matter, and I can no longer forbear. Ye all have heard those ravishing strains of eloquence which have just fallen from the lips of the Beloved Disciple, whose happy privilege it was to lean on Jesus’ breast, and place his feet in every footstep of his loving Lord ; but his expansive heart was formed for love, and even when planted in the wilderness of sin could scarce forbear to send out tendrils of affection which bound all hearts to him. No wonder, then, when planted in the garden of the Lord, and cherished with the fertilising dew, which ever rises from the boundless sea of love, that he should grow so stately as you now behold. But I was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, and when the saints were hunted down like ravenous beasts of prey I gloated o’er the spoil, and when the flaying scourge extorted from their quivering tongue a blasphemy to which their hearts gave no consent, my cruel soul did feel a keener pang of joy. I am a monument to the almighty power of love, the matchless power of all-redeeming grace. Whatever honours or distinctions may lawfully await on others, of this I make my only boast, ‘I am the chief of sinners.’ I triumph only in His saving grace and all-redeeming love—a love which only can be measured by the depths of sin, whose depths alone are fathomed by

redeeming love. 'Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'"

And now, as the loud 'Amen' reverberated like a mighty thunder-peal from the inmost depths of every heart, amid the cheerful greetings of the multitude a spirit rose of matchless ardour, and casting round his penetrating eye (before whose power on one most memorable day three thousand souls were pricked to the heart), thus he began :—

"Brethren beloved,—If love, which planted such a goodly tree in far more genial soil than nature gave—if love, which brought so rich a trophy from the enemy's ranks as he to whom you have just listened with such rapturous delight, demand so high a song, what strains of rapture can give utterance adequate to celebrate that boundless love and power which brought a rebel back to his allegiance, and crowded him with honours thick besides? I was among the first of all the chosen followers of our loving Lord, and, being emulous to catch His approbation, I cheerfully performed those sweet commissions which His love enjoined ; but there was at the bottom of my heart the canker-worm of pride, and worldly greatness, and emolument, which would not let me see His kingdom was not earthly ; and when my loving Master lifted up the veil to teach me that His throne could only be attained through suffering, I cried, with all the powers of wounded pride, 'Lord, that be far from Thee ; this shall not be done unto Thee.' And on that fearful night in which He poured out His loving soul to death, He found me sleeping on my guard ; and when I saw Him bound, and led a willing captive to the high priest's palace, where cruel

hate and scorn were without measure heaped upon Him, my courage and allegiance all gave way, and my faint heart, which had so bravely vowed to follow Him to prison and to death, now quailed before the timorous breath of a weak woman, and I deserted and denied my Lord with bitterest oaths and curses. But, oh! the power of His Almighty love, which, overleaping all the bounds of His most direful anguish, cast a melting gaze of pity on me which broke my treacherous heart. And now those idle dreams of earthly greatness which, like a cloud, had wrapped around my heart, and shut out all true love and pure desire, were scattered like the chaff before the blast, and clearer light shone in upon my soul, and matchless love had made a perfect conquest of my stubborn heart. Oh! who shall reckon all the mighty debt due to His priceless love, or who discharge?—since endless praise rebounding back from Him in ceaseless showers of blessing can only but increase our endless obligation. ‘For we are redeemed not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.’ ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away.’”

He scarce resumed his seat, amid the joyful acclamations of the throng, when one who had long time cast around a restless eye, as if some heavy burden lay upon his heart, struggling for egress, arose and thus began :—

“ Oh how shall I, the most unworthy of earth’s sons, extenuate my folly or my crimes ? I can conceive of love begetting love, as in the favourite of the chosen few whom Jesus loved, and who was His companion in the wilderness. I do not wonder at the mercy shown to him who was so early taught that persecution was to God a service most acceptable, because he did it ignorantly in unbelief ; and I felt no surprise that one dark stain in a whole life of service—one foul, hard speech made in an evil hour of danger, when the tongue refused to give the utterance of the heart, should have been freely blotted out, when deepest sorrow sent forth showers of tears ; but my dark life is stained with blackest crimes. I filled the streets of fair Jerusalem with blood. I was anointed as the shepherd of the flock—to nourish, feed, and guard with tenderness and care ; but like a greedy wolf which gloats upon the prey, I hastened to the slaughter of the innocent, till all my garments dripped with human gore. I made of mine own offspring torches to light the cursed Vale of Hinnom, and compelled God’s chosen race to go a-whoring after heathen gods ; nor have I aught of ignorance to plead. I was the son of blessed Hezekiah, who walked before the Lord in truth, and with a perfect heart ; and when the Lord of Hosts sent messengers to warn me of the dreadful storm of wrath which hovered o’er the land—a storm so terrible that the bare mention of it made men’s ears to tingle—I turned away mine ear, and slew the hoary messengers. At length the tempest burst in all its wildest fury, and the red hand of war made direful havoc of a people so oppressed with lust and crime before. I thought to hide myself among the

thorns; but what are thickest thorns, though every stunted branch were armed with points of sharpest steel? for where God rises up to judgment the thickest battlements can never shelter from his thunderbolts. The hour of vengeance came, and I was led a captive, heavy bound and fettered to the dungeons of the strong Assyrian King, made every hour a prisoner on his mercy. But the Most High God, who is of great compassion, longsuffering, and very merciful unto them that repent, and who, according to His great goodness, has promised forgiveness unto sinners who seek him with the heart, hath multiplied His mercies unto me according to my multiplied offences and transgressions, and forgiven me all my sin of His own abundant and infinite love. Therefore will I praise Him for ever and ever whose is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever."

And now a sound, sweet as a choir of minstrels, with hearts and voices perfectly attuned, came sweeping on the air: "O, praise the Lord, all ye nations. Praise Him all ye people. For His merciful kindness is great towards us, and the truth of the Lord endureth for ever and ever." This was one of Heaven's glorious voluntaries, if that may be called voluntary which swells the pure emotions of the breast to such ecstatic rapture as to overleap the strongest flood-gates of the heart, pouring its torrents of delight and rapture all around.

And now arose amid the rapturous greetings of the throng one whose radiant countenance was no uncertain index of the ardour which so intensely glowed within; and thus he spake:—

“Citizens of Heaven and Princes of our God and of His anointed Son,—If those who most receive should most promote the praise of Him who gave, then my song of praise should at least equal the mightiest strains that seraph ever reached ; but who the mighty words shall dictate which can all His praise rehearse ? Words may be channels meet to celebrate the wonders of His power, at whose Almighty voice the universe arose with endless order, rich variety, and beauty crowned ; but when we chant the wonders of His matchless love, both words and thoughts alike lose all their power. His love is as the ocean—bottomless, without dimensions, where all our highest thoughts and words are lost. His love was pleased to take me from the wilderness where I kept my father’s sheep, a ruddy shepherd boy, and make me shepherd of His chosen race. I found them hemmed on every side by angry enemies all ready to devour, holding that glorious land which God had promised to their fathers as an inheritance with but a doubtful tenure. But this right arm which smote the lion and the bear, and wrested from their cruel jaws the weak and innocent, now nerved with power from the exhaustless storehouse of Omnipotence, did lead the valiant tribes from conquest unto conquest, till all God’s enemies and theirs were vanquished on the field, and peace and happiness did reign through all the chosen tribes. But, ah ! how weak and vain at best is human might and power. I left unguarded one important citadel, that citadel my heart, where an implacable enemy was ever on the watch, and in an evil hour he gained an entrance there ; and I, alas ! whom strongest foes in strongest phalanx joined had never vanquished on the field, must

have been utterly destroyed in single combat by the cruel power of lust had not Almighty love and tender pity joined for my deliverance ; but though the foe was vanquished and o'ercome, yet so fierce and deadly was the encounter that I still bear the wounds upon my name of that dire conflict, and they are destined to remain within the Book of Truth a warning beacon to the end of time. 'I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplication. He hath brought me up out of a horrible pit and out of the miry clay. He hath set my feet upon a rock, and hath established my goings. He hath put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God. Oh, clap your hands all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. Let us sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever and ever, with our mouth let us make known His faithfulness throughout all generations.' "

And now arose amid the admiration of the multitude one who had long been listening with earnest, deep, yet quiet contemplation, as if some mighty problem were debating in his brain ; and casting round an eye which beamed with tenderness unutterable, he thus began :—

"I cannot boast those matchless powers of eloquence in which the glorious deeds of our Messiah are rehearsed, which to repeat to all infinity, can never pall upon the heart, but only rouse a keener appetite which shall intensify with every fresh rehearsal through eternal years ; and though I have no words commensurate with my claims (if claims may be allowed where all is favour undeserved, unmerited), yet I stand the greatest debtor to that bound-

less love which raised us from the deepest pit of woe, and snapped the galling yoke from all our necks, bidding us stand erect within the sunshine of that glorious freedom which our Messiah has wrought for all the race. But, before we estimate the depths of woe into which sin hath plunged, we must, too, stretch our measuring line to that exalted pinnacle whence we fell. I am the father of the human race—I was created in the image of our God, spotless, and free, and happy, sole monarch of the new-made world when first it came from His creative hand, who launched it midst the spheres a gorgeous queen of beauty. I was surrounded with a garden of delights, delights I fondly called my own, for He who placed me there had freely given them all to me; and had He called them back, I had no room for just complaint, since I myself was His most rightful property. One only prohibition was imposed, which should have added to the enjoyment of the boundless store so unrestricted, seeing it was the touchstone of our innocence and fealty. But in an evil hour an evil thought, which, had it not been harboured, had remained as powerless as the puny arm of Satan against the Throne of God, did its fell work. For evil thoughts indulged brought forth desires, desires awakened, unbarred the sluice-gates of the heart to pride and ambition; these in possession then threw back the flood-gates of rebellion and contempt, which, like an ocean loosed from its craggy barrier, wrought death and desolation all around. And now, bereft of all which made life dear, and, worst of all, of that sweet angel, Hope, which follows men through all the wrecks of time, and even on the rocks of dark despair is ever last to quit, I

and my guilty partner in transgression, dearest Eve, whom God had given to share and yet increase my joys, now vainly sought the thickest groves of Eden, to hide ourselves from His all-seeing eye, before which hell's deepest caverns are without a covering, till summoned by a Voice Omnipotent (trembling with guilt and dire dismay, with nought to plead as our extenuation), we stood mute prisoners at His bar, whose incensed justice our black crimes had fearfully invoked. But oh ! the depths of all-redeeming love, outreaching far our dire, extremest ruin, fetched back the angel Hope again ; and when there was no other help, His own all-powerful arm wrought out complete deliverance. 'All we like sheep have gone astray, but the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' The mountains of our guilt were heaped on Him, and, by the sovereign power of His almighty love, hurled to the deep abysses of forgetfulness. Immortal honours, endless praise, and matchless song alike are powerless to set forth all His worth. Who, then, shall utter all His praise ?—

“ ‘Praise Him, all ye first-born stars of light,
Praise Him in his sanctuary,
Praise Him in the firmament of His power,
Praise Him, ye heaven of heavens,
Praise Him for all His mighty acts,
Praise Him according to His excellent greatness,
Praise Him with the sound of a trumpet,
Praise Him with the psaltery and harp,
Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord,
Praise ye the Lord.’ ”

And now, amid the loud Amens, which like deep thunderpeals reverberated throughout all the azure vaults, the Elder of the Feast again arose, and casting

a beam of radiant love on all around, in earnest tones of eloquence he thus burst forth :—

“Dearly beloved,—If our hearts should fail to melt in the all-consuming flame of Jesus’ love as set before us during this delightful feast, surely the frame of heaven itself must soon give way ; these adamantine rocks would take the place of hearts, and they become dissolved. Let us now go into the Temple of Worship, and with our hearts enlarged and all on fire, approach His glorious throne, and with the general assembly of the first-born sons of light present, as best we can, though feeble at the best, those Hallelujahs which of right unto our God belong.”

He ceased, and on each head appeared a flame of fire (like that seen at Pentecost), and every face was filled with such a glorious radiance as seemed to quench the light from my faint, feeble orbs ; and falling into the arms of my beloved guide I quickly cried, “ Oh, take me hence, or this effulgent light will crush the feebleness of my mortality.” Again he pressed unto my lips the golden cup, and bid me hold my courage fast ; but, casting my languid eye upon his lovely face, I saw the same effulgent glory there revealed, and I fell in humble adoration at his feet ; and having raised me with his loving arm and tenderly embraced, he placed me by his side again, and with most cheering words he thus addressed me :—

“ Brother beloved (for all are brethren here), the end of my most pleasant and delightful task has come, and I must soon away to join the general worshipping assembly at the temple of our God, where the glory shines so dazzlingly that mortal eye, however thickly veiled, can never

bear its brightness. That flood of glory which now lights on thee, and seem to quench thy mortal vision, is but a beam reflected from that sea of light (before which angels veil their eyes with both their wings) which streams through every place within the precincts of this blissful paradise, insufferable to mortal eye but for this thick veil which, unperceived, I placed before thine eye ere thou didst pass the city gates, but which for this brief moment I have lifted to quicken thy already wide perception of celestial glory. Now I must say Farewell; but ere we part I have a secret to reveal which throughout all thy future journeyings upon earth may comfort thee. But to demonstrate what I now unfold, and that it may gain a deeper lodgment in thy heart, I lay aside for this brief instant my celestial guise, and now behold me as on earth thou didst delight to gaze." Lifting my hand to shade my trembling eye I looked, and, oh! how shall mere words depict the excess of joy which in a moment, as a sheet of flame, enwrapt my soul? "Child of my heart," I cried, "and is it thou to whom I must for ever be indebted for all these visions of delight and highest joy? Thou art the darling of mine own bosom, snatched away by Death's most cruel hand when my fond heart was filled with schemes for thy advancement in the world." To which my darling child (for he was no other than my long lost son) in mildest accents quick replied, "My fondest parent, do not speak of thine indebtedness; we all are debtors equal to the boundless mercy of our loving Lord. And speak not of Death's cruelty; he was but the friendly messenger who cut the brittle thread which bound me to a world of woe, and placed me here where sin and woe and

death can never come. Oh ! tell my brethren dear and tell my loving sister, tell her who bare me with the pangs of mortal travail, and whose deep, constant love must ever twine around my changeless heart,—tell all to meet me here, that with thyself, and that sweet sister who has safe arrived, we may present unto our loving Father God that which is well-pleasing in His sight—a happy and unbroken family in heaven.” And, as he pressed sweet kisses on my lips, lo ! I awoke.





the 1990s, the number of people with a mental health problem has increased by 50% (Mental Health Foundation 1999). The prevalence of mental health problems has increased in the general population, and the incidence of mental health problems has increased in the prison population.

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the mental health needs of prisoners. The Department of Health (2000) has published a strategy for mental health services, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of prisoners. The Department of Health (2000) has also published a strategy for mental health services, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of prisoners. The Department of Health (2000) has also published a strategy for mental health services, which includes a commitment to improve the mental health of prisoners.

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